

## *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 nonviolence, 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.*

## **A Social Creed for the Twenty-First Century**

### **And Recognition of the Centennial of the "Social Creed of the Churches of 1908"**

The 218th General Assembly (2008):

1. Approves the text [above] of "A Social Creed for the Twenty-First Century" and its two-page background statement and rationale;
2. Honors 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. Directs 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 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. Directs 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. Directs the Compassion, Peace, and Justice Ministries of the General Assembly Council to integrate “A Social Creed for the Twenty-First Century” into its ongoing 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. Encourages 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.

*(Item 09-09. This item derived from a resolution developed by the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy; approved as amended.)*

## I. CIVIL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS

***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.***

A Social Creed for the Twenty-First Century

# LIFT EVERY VOICE: DEMOCRACY, VOTING RIGHTS AND ELECTORAL REFORM

## Executive Summary

### Introduction

The study paper [is divided] roughly in halves, the first providing a theological and historical basis, the second explaining how the recommendations work. It concludes with a description of the study team, which included three political scientists, two ethicists, several lawyers, an educational administrator, a pastor, and a pastor-ethicist writer. The Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns [co-sponsored] this resolution for its clear historic links to the disenfranchisement of African-American and other voters.

### I. Outlining the Problems

This study begins with a description of the linked problems that many simply call “gridlock,” or problems in Washington, DC. But these problems are not simply in Washington. Our current election system has the world’s highest levels of campaign spending yet one of the lowest levels of voter turnout of any democracy (114th by one measure). With a few high profile exceptions, participation among communities of color is particularly dampened due to registration processes that are inefficient, inconvenient, and inaccessible, reinforcing the limited racial, ethnic, and gender diversity among those holding political power. The disturbing dependence of our political representatives on continuous fundraising for their increasingly expensive campaigns reflects the increasing divisions in wealth and power and the pervasive partisanship and polarization in American politics. With the move to electronic voting equipment, there are numerous new technological and managerial vulnerabilities in our election processes.

Voter turnout is lowest among those of low income, low education, and young citizens whose mobility makes it hard to meet arbitrary and restrictive deadlines. Requirements that voters purchase state-issued photo IDs seem likely to discriminate against low-income voters, when the Federal Election Commission’s own findings, revealed before congressional committee, reveal no significant incidence of voter fraud. The permanent disenfranchisement of felons unfairly affects citizens of color and men. Communities of color have long been targeted in partisan-motivated purging of registration lists. Though aware of the original rationale for keeping the federal District of Columbia “un-political,” continuing to deprive the 600,000 plus citizens of the District (65 percent African American) full voting rights seems a partisan and inevitably racially determined act of denial. Civic education is also necessary, especially for young people, new citizens, and inexperienced voters.

While the 2006 renewal of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 is applauded, without effective, non-partisan enforcement, historic patterns of electoral disenfranchisement will remain. The Electoral College for presidential selection imposes another uneven burden on a majority of the population; it is an undemocratic anachronism that produces more “spectator states” than contested ones and can deny office to the candidate receiving the majority vote.

Partisan-controlled redistricting has created gerrymandered districts that ensure the re-election of approximately 98 percent of all House incumbents every two years, and there are other incumbent advantages as well. Campaign finance laws and Federal Election Commission need to be further strengthened to deal with pressure group power. Media giants that lease the publicly-owned airwaves have a responsibility to provide some level of equal access to all viable political candidates and parties.

With one exception, the affirmative right to vote, the study team recommendations avoid constitutional changes and larger issues of governance. This has to do with the assignment given by the Assembly, and not an undue reverence for the Constitution itself—a wonderful but not sacred document. (“The Constitution was made for the Republic, not the Republic for the Constitution”). The widespread frustration with the electoral process lies behind the numerous proposals to make the process fairer and more representative than the current marketing process. Hence the recommendation that consideration be given to proposals by FairVote and others of methods such as Ranked Choice, Instant Runoff Voting, and Proportional Voting—all of which are already employed in limited jurisdictions and which can empower minority communities.

Overall, this resolution brings together two profoundly important policy streams in Presbyterian social witness. Historically, there is our longstanding nonpartisan support for civil and representative democratic government in America. More recently, the 1999 General Assembly covenanted “to embrace racial and cultural diversity as God-given assets of the human family ...” As Americans, “we the people” believe in equal rights under the law as well as “the pursuit of life, liberty and happiness.” As Reformed Christians, we know that liberty, equality, and fairness of representation require constant vigilance.

## II. Biblical, Theological, and Ethical Foundations

The Bible reveals God acting decisively in history to provide for human renewal of social structures by our struggles for freedom and truth, and for love and justice. Seven principles are emphasized here as contributing to the influence of Christianity on the foundations of democracy: the sovereignty of God, human equality within God’s covenant, the critical tension between our human sinfulness and God’s good purposes, the prophetic traditions linked to Jesus’ reconciling work, the call to mutual responsibility with neighbors, the special concern given to the suffering and oppressed and special accountability of those with most power, and the call to live out these teachings as active witnesses.

John Calvin gave structure to the Reformed Churches to reflect his vision for reforming both church and political life. He understood his work in *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* to be a guide to the understanding of the Bible. He concluded the *Institutes* in Book IV in two sections on the liberty of the Christian life in the church and on liberty in the political realm. Neither our current form of the church nor of the state correspond exactly to his recommendations—both have evolved through five hundred years of history. However, our concern for liberty and accountability in both institutions remains.

The Bible, John Calvin and contemporary Christian ethics yield three approaches to justice in politics: participation, equality and fairness in the system of voting, and accountability as

citizens and officials. There is no human liberty without participation in social reality—which, in the American situation, is the representative-democratic processes of politics. Accountability is demanded of every political figure in the Bible, and that accountability is spread to all in a democracy. To deny anyone a fair vote is a sin. Reinhold Niebuhr’s aphorism that “(human) capacity for justice makes democracy possible but (human) capacity for injustice makes democracy necessary” is a fair summary of the possibilities of our political life.

#### Presbyterian Tradition, Democracy, and Civil Rights

Countless Presbyterians serving on town councils, in state legislatures and in our nation’s Congress itself have known how important basic fairness and integrity are to the work of government. Our tradition has never accorded special virtue or power to bishops or kings or their modern equivalents. Positively stated, each of us has an affirmative political vocation that comes with citizenship in our system of self-government. Historically, we Presbyterians have made much of the parallels between our system of government in the church, with its elected leadership in the session, the presbytery, the synod and the General Assembly, and that of the United States, moving from local to state and to federal elections. The Reformed tradition profoundly influenced Western democracies, providing through ethos, public spirit, and principle a fundamental basis for checks and balances of power and for freedom of conscience.

Because we stand together for the ongoing reform of both the church and the society (*ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda*), Presbyterians have consistently urged governments to improve their functioning and correct injustices. For us, the separation of church and state has not meant the separation of faith and politics for such a separation would be an abdication of responsibility.

The Civil Rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s remains a defining moment for the “mainline” churches, in part due to the witness of particular prophets like Martin Luther King, Jr., within the historic Black churches, but also in part due to African American leaders, like Gayraud S. Wilmore, and advocacy bodies within those mainline communions. Yet the study also shows a consistent witness for racial justice in the predecessor churches of the PCUSA that is traced in detail from 1947 forward under the heading, “Historical Steps in Civil Rights Advocacy.”

#### IV. Presbyterian Precedents for Electoral Reform

The Church’s concern for voting rights has been accompanied by concern for electoral reform. One sentence from a 1950 General Assembly statement sums up the basic Presbyterian approach to faith and politics: “We believe that every Christian should recognize the individual responsibility of citizenship including not only the responsibility to know about public issues and candidates, but also to provide Christian leadership in local parties and to go faithfully to the polls.” The 1983 *Reformed Faith and Politics* statement recommends that Presbyterians actively support political participation, voter registration, civil discourse and the pursuit of political office, revitalized parties, and beyond “single-interest politics,” broad coalitional work for justice, always recognizing... that we heed the

Reformed concern to resist “human limitations, narrowness, and sin.” A question, to which the study returns at its conclusion, is how much the Christian “political vocation” envisioned implies the kind of Reformed civic virtue that, in turn, is formed in our democratically-organized congregations and presbyteries.

The General Assembly spoke again in favor of more voter registration in 1996, and for campaign finance reform in 2000. The study group reporting in this document (2008) felt that a responsible analysis of this last issue deserves future attention, in light of the Supreme Court’s recent ruling in support of special interests purchasing unlimited advocacy advertising under an interpretation of the right to “free speech.”

## V. Explaining and Supporting the Recommendations in the Resolution: Four Sections

A. Toward Increasing Voter Participation: This section includes the proposal for an “affirmative right to vote” that, rare among nations, is not included in the US Constitution, and a corresponding recommendation for Universal Voter Registration that would underline the expectation that voting is part of democracy (Currently there are approximately 50 million unregistered adults). Making Election Day (or weekend) a national holiday, standardizing some of the practices of 10,000 voting jurisdictions, expanding absentee and early voting options, would all increase participation. Congregations can also encourage registration and candidate debates.

B. Toward Insuring Equality And Fairness: This section proposes full voting rights for District of Columbia citizens, restoration of voting (and civil) rights to felons who have paid their debts to society, restoring integrity to the Department of Justice and its Civil Rights Division, resisting new voter ID requirements (due to lack of fraud), preventing vote “caging” or targeted purging of voter lists, punishing those who mislead or intimidate voters, and perhaps largest of all, instituting non-partisan legislative districting by dedicated professionals.

C. Toward Enforcing Accountability and Responsibility in our Electoral Process: This would include a “best practices” standard or uniform national infrastructure for voter registration records, staff training, public education and electoral management, including transparency and design standards for voting equipment, ballot design, and ballot counting. An important step would be fully funding the Election Assistance Commission to follow the Help America Vote (HAVA) Act of 2002, monitor voting machine quality and operation, and enforce campaign finance reforms for “clean elections.”

D. Proposals for Renewing Our Democracy: These include reforming the primary system (rather than the very-early front-loading now in place) and the Electoral College (to favor popular vote), and allowing Instant Run-off voting and proportional voting.

## VI. Conclusion: Civic Virtue and Civic Ethos; The Reformed and Reforming Citizen and Church

When people do not have voice or vote, they exit the political system. Politics is communal decision-making and the more diverse the community, the more personally enlarging politics

can become. To listen to all voices, even to help lift them up as the title of this study—from James Weldon Johnson’s hymn—suggests, is not to agree with them all. It is a call to listen for God’s voice, and then to speak and act as Christians for the good of all as best as we can see it. Presbyterians do not idealize the political process. Thus we are cautious in claiming “civic virtue,” but convinced that politics is about more than interests grappling for advantage. Politics is not simply a marketplace. It is about power and subsidies and resentments and fears of loss, but it is also about enduring loyalties and hopes, expanded identities and generosity of spirit.

Reports like this produce recommendations because “truth is in order to goodness,” as the *Book of Order* says, and because even the elect benefit from guidance, as Calvin taught in the “third use of the law.” Popular leaders and parties can promote irresponsible ideas, ignore dangers, burden future generations. Good laws are essential but not sufficient; enforcement requires a belief that government itself should serve “the people.” We thus advocate a Presbyterian democratic or electoral ethic of individual discipline, multicultural awareness and communal responsibility.

We are Christians first and Americans second, understanding God’s sovereignty above every nation, including our own. The gifts of the Reformed tradition to democratic life have been large, based in a clarity about justice and the importance of impartial law for the common good. This report is intended to aid in the naming and updating of that civic contribution.

### Recommendations

The 218th General Assembly (2008):

1. Approves the report, “Lift Every Voice: Democracy, Voting Rights, and Electoral Reform,” for study, and approves the following recommendations:
  - a. In order to strengthen the study and witness of Presbyterians across the church:
    - (1) direct the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly to publish both resolution and study paper (together, the report) on the PC(USA) website, making available a printed copy for interested Presbyterians, for each presbytery and synod, and for use with state and federal legislators, election commissions, and other appropriate officials;
    - (2) encourage all members and friends of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to study and take actions suggested, including, above all, to vote their consciences; and
    - (3) direct the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) and the General Assembly Council (GAC), through the Presbyterian Washington Office and other appropriate ministries of peace and justice, to advocate and support the positions developed in this resolution, and urge presbyteries, synods, and ecumenical ministries – national, regional, and local – to advocate and support these positions as well within their witness for the common good in a democratic society.
  - b. To increase voter participation:

(1) commend the extension of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 by the Bush Administration and Congress, by wide majorities (July 26, 2006; Senate: 98-0; House of Representatives: 390-33);

(2) support adequate funding and non-partisan enforcement of the Voting Rights Act's provisions by the Department of Justice, the Federal Election Commission, and other federal and state agencies, with the ultimate goal of increasing U.S. voting levels among all U.S. population groups;

(3) support a constitutional 'affirmative right to vote' of all citizens to undergird full and fair exercise of the franchise in all states, counties, and municipalities, including districts, territories, commonwealths, and protectorates unless specifically excluded by law;

(4) support universal voter registration to allow all citizens over eighteen years of age to vote, unless specifically excluded by civil or criminal sanction during period of sentence, building on the "single, uniform, official, centralized, interactive computerized statewide voter registration list" called for by the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA);

(5) support making election day a holiday or weekend event, to give people of all income levels, employment situations, and family responsibilities more opportunity to get to the polls;

(6) support the easing of absentee ballot restrictions to allow general voting by mail and early voting, by mail or in person, to reduce potential for long lines and equipment failures; and

(7) support measures providing greater accessibility for all voters, including those with disabilities and those speaking foreign languages.

(8) support polling places on or near college campuses.

c. To ensure equality and fairness:

(1) support full voting rights for the more than 600,000 residents of the District of Columbia who are currently unrepresented by a voting representative in the congress, even though many pay taxes;

(2) support restoration of voting and other civil rights to former felons (more than five million persons), helping reintegrate them into society and give more voice to their generally poorer home communities;

(3) disapprove the imposition of special identification (ID) requirements that do not provide for opportunities and means by which all persons may meet the requirements without placing a disproportionate and undue burden upon any group(s) of persons;

(4) support the Deceptive Practices and Voter Intimidation Act and similar legislation to prevent misleading mailings and advertisements, unofficial yet uniformed personnel being posted near polling stations, and other “vote-suppression” methods;

(5) support mandated publicity for voter roll purges to supplement direct mail communication in poorer and academic communities with high percentages of renters; and

(6) support nonpartisan legislative redistricting based on an adequately funded census to make districts more contiguous and competitive, including those with racial ethnic majorities.

(7) support efforts designed to ensure that persons otherwise qualified to vote be permitted to cast ballots only in the jurisdiction in which they are entitled legally to vote.]

d. To provide for greater accountability and responsibility, to support:

(1) development of a nonpartisan professional electoral infrastructure in the place of partisan elections and patronage hiring of election officials, to apply “best practice” standards for recordkeeping, staff-training, public education, and electoral management;

(2) national minimum standards for voting equipment, ballot design, ballot counting, and transparency of administration to help all citizens have their votes counted properly;

(3) increased expertise and funding for the Electoral Assistance Commission Council to perform testing and licensing of electronic voting equipment, such machines and software to require safeguards for confidentiality, modular independence, and audit-ability;

(4) public funding and guaranteed access to airwaves for candidates to offset the great advantages of private contributions and personal wealth, as well as legislation to limit total contribution levels insofar as this is possible: examples of such legislation include the Fair Elections Now Act, the Clean Money Clean Elections Act, as well as the McCain-Feingold and McCain-Feingold-Durbin Free Air Time Acts;<sup>i</sup>

(5) legislation to restrict the privileged access of former elected officials to lobbying positions in industries they formerly regulated and other legislation to prevent the “revolving door” by which regulation in the public interest is undermined; and

(6) legislation and appropriate support for judicial cases that distinguish between campaign contributions and “free speech,” allowing meaningful regulation of special interest groups and individuals who are currently expected to spend approximately \$400 million of the \$1.5 billion 2008 election cycle.

e. To renew and broaden democratic practice, to support:

(1) alternatives to an ever-earlier primary season that would shorten the campaign process, decrease its costs, and increase the influence of diverse and urban states, through such means as the “Delaware Plan,” the “American Plan,” and other rotating primary plans

designed to spread opportunity among voters in all states and allow a reasonably open field for new candidates;

(2) protection of nonpartisan free speech by religious and other groups from government interference, while affirming the church-state proscription of religious and other nonprofit organizations providing election support for particular candidates or parties; and

(3) consideration of ways to increase voter choice by “instant run-off” or ranked choice voting measures that tabulate first, second, and even third choices, saving money on run-off elections and potentially increasing consensus and diminishing partisanship.

2. Approve the following practical actions for individual members and congregations:

a. Educational programs:

(1) Co-sponsor or participate in political issues forums with members of differing racial ethnic groups, before both local and national elections. It is important that congregants hear both sides of an issue from two or more speakers or from the candidates themselves.

(2) Provide educational programs on the history and impacts of systemic racism in order to develop the “racial literacy” all citizens need to be able to notice assumptions and practices that marginalize racial ethnic members of our communities.

(3) Study and debate new voting processes like Instant Runoff Voting and Proportional Voting that could affect the tendencies toward two-party dominance and periodic “gridlock” in our current electoral system.

(4) Provide voter education, both about the issues and the importance and complexity of this responsibility (this could include instruction on the issues addressed in this resolution).

(5) Pastors can preach on the moral dimensions of political issues. Sermons should be clearly grounded in Scripture and be informed by our confessional heritage and past statements of the General Assemblies of the Presbyterian Church.

b. Encourage voter registration and turnout:

(1) Conduct voter registration drives in partnership with organizations led by people of color and other neighborhood institutions, including ministerial organizations and interfaith bodies.

(2) Survey one’s community, especially neighbors with the least means, in order to find out what issues are important to them in an upcoming election.

(3) Participate in voter turnout efforts.

c. Support improvements in the political process:

(1) Volunteer to be a poll watcher. A poll watcher is instructed on how to monitor activities at a local polling station to ensure the electoral process is fair and open to all registered to vote at that station.

(2) Support and encourage the action of the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly in filing briefs in the Supreme Court on issues the General Assembly has supported, including campaign finance reform and the role of “free speech” and advertising.

(3) Support and encourage presbyteries and synods in monitoring local and state election laws, registration laws, and the use of voting machines.

(4) Support legislation; especially those on issues that have been supported by the General Assembly or one’s local presbytery, such as voting rights in the District of Columbia, bills against deceptive electoral practices, and felon re-enfranchisement.

(5) Call on ACSWP and Racial Ethnic and Women’s Ministries-Presbyterian Women, in consultation with ACREC, to sponsor regional conferences on the electoral process and people of color, antiracism issues and systemic discrimination.

*(Item 09-14. This action derived from a resolution jointly developed by the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy and the Advisory Committee on Racial Ethnic Concerns; approved as amended.)*

### **On Equal Rights for Families of Same Gender Parents**

The 218th General Assembly (2008):

1. Renews and strengthens the long-standing Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) commitment to equal protection under the law for lesbian and gay persons and the 216th General Assembly (2004)’s affirmation of the right of same-gender persons to civil union and, thereby, to all the benefits, privileges, and responsibilities of civil union.

a. Recognizes that married couples enjoy more than 1,000 protections, benefits, and responsibilities that are denied to committed couples in same-gender partnerships and their children.

b. Recognizes that equality under the law does not discriminate against some committed couples but sees that same-gender partners also have access to all protections, benefits, and responsibilities of civil union.

c. Requests the Stated Clerk, the General Assembly Council, and other representatives of the PC(USA) to urge state legislatures and the federal government to apply the principle of equal protection to same-gender couples and their children.

2. Directs the Moderator of the General Assembly to appoint a special committee, representing the broad diversity and theological balance of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), to study the following, and report to the 219th General Assembly (2010), including any policy recommendations growing out of the study:

- a. The history of the laws governing marriage and civil union, including current policy debates.
  - b. How the theology and practice of marriage have developed in the Reformed and broader Christian tradition.
  - c. The relationship between civil union and Christian marriage.
  - d. The effects of current laws on same-gender partners and their children.
  - e. The place of covenanted same-gender partnerships in the Christian community.
3. Supports congregations, sessions, and ministers of Word and Sacrament who are seeking to extend pastoral care as well as outreach and evangelism to same-gender couples and their nontraditional families who are more and more our neighbors on our streets and our fellow members in our pews.
  4. This [action] seeks to renew and strengthen the commitment of the PC(USA) to equal protection under the law, encourage steps to reinforce this commitment, and to affirm the importance of pastoral care and outreach to non-traditional families, including those [with] same-gender commitment partners. This overture advocates for equal rights and does not seek to redefine the nature of Christian marriage.

*(Item 04.13. This action, derived from an overture from Denver Presbytery, was approved as amended.*

*Note: An overture from the Presbytery of Baltimore, On Amending W-4.9000 Regarding the Definition of Marriage was disapproved by the assembly.)*

***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 ... the abolition of forced labor, human trafficking, and the exploitation of children.***

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### **On Preventing the Trafficking of Women, Internationally and Nationally**

The 218th General Assembly (2008) [in order to] remind the government of the United States of America of the provisions of its own Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) signed into law by President Clinton in 2000, and [to] request that it be conscientiously enforced:

1. Instructs the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly to communicate with the United States Justice Department

- a. to urge law enforcement agencies to work together to close loopholes in the investigation, arrest and prosecution of human traffickers;
  - b. to urge the targeting of exploiters, not their victims;
  - c. to urge the development of more efficient law enforcement training programs to aid in identifying human traffickers and their victims.
2. Instructs the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly to communicate with the United States Department of Homeland Security
    - a. to urge the development of methods to recognize and arrest traffickers;
    - b. to urge the development of methods to identify forged passports and visas in order to limit the number of trafficked victims brought into the United States.
  3. Instructs the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly to find ways to urge agencies in other countries to stop traffickers from enticing women with the promise of good jobs in other countries, and by promoting false marriage.
  4. Instructs the General Assembly Council to direct the appropriate offices of the General Assembly Council (GAC) to work to strengthen laws that prohibit trafficking and sexual exploitation of women and children.
  5. Instructs the General Assembly Council to direct and promote the appropriate offices of the General Assembly Council (GAC) to create educational materials on the trafficking and sexual exploitation of women and children for use by presbyteries and congregations, and to promote the use of the adult curriculum entitled *Sex Trafficking* by Martha Bettis-Gee (available at <http://www.thethoughtfulchristian.com>).

*(Item 11-12. This action derived from an overture from the Presbytery of Plains and Peaks; approved as amended.)*

### **On Expanding the Church's Ministry With and Advocacy Against Human Trafficking**

The 218th General Assembly (2008):

1. Directs the General Assembly Council and the Office of General Assembly to expand their ministry with and advocacy against human trafficking to include adults, especially women, by supporting the Racial Ethnic and Women's Ministries/Presbyterian Women ministry area to work with the ministries of Compassion, Peace, and Justice in providing resources to the wider church for education and advocacy.
2. Urges the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) to regularly include trafficking of persons in its human rights updates.

3. Encourages the Presbyterian Hunger Program, Self-Development of People, Presbyterian Women, and other grant making entities in the PC(USA) to fund partner congregations, presbyteries, and synods, in order to
  - a. provide safe housing, medical and psychological help for trafficked persons;
  - b. support efforts to obtain appropriate documentation; and/or,
  - c. assist trafficked persons, especially women, in safely returning to their country of origin.
4. Directs the Presbyterian Washington and the United Nations Offices to
  - a. express concern for the escalation of trafficking within the U.S. and use the public witness channels available to them to raise issues with appropriate national and international representatives; and,
  - b. partner with ecumenical and interfaith entities to build coalitions against trafficking and participate in activities such as the National Day of Human Trafficking Awareness (January 11) and the Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (UN).
5. Directs the General Assembly Council ministries of World Mission and Compassion, Peace, and Justice, in consultation with Racial Ethnic and Women's Ministries, to work with appropriate offices and partners, to
  - a. gather data on initiatives that respond to the terror of human trafficking and provide materials on the Web or in its interpretation resources, which lift up the PC(USA) efforts to combat trafficking systemically, in the United States and around the world; and
  - b. report its findings to the 219th General Assembly (2010).

*(Item 11-13. This action is derived from a resolution developed by the Advisory Committee on Women's Concerns.)*

***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 ... employment for all, at a family-sustaining living wage, with equal pay for comparable work.***

A Social Creed for the Twenty-First Century

**GOD'S WORK IN WOMEN'S HANDS**

## PAY EQUITY AND JUST COMPENSATION

### Executive Summary

#### Introduction:

In 1999 the 211th General Assembly directed the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) and the Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns (ACWC) to "initiate a churchwide study on the current status of women in the church and society, with particular attention to issues of aging women, pay equity, child care, family/medical leave, and relations between women and men in places of work, home, family . . . ." This study of pay equity, with its recommendations, is a response to that directive.

The majority of recommendations from this study address the church's calling to be "the provisional demonstration of what God intends for all of humanity" (*Book of Order*, G-3.0200) by setting its own house in order through actions that will (a) determine whether an unjust disparity in compensation exists within the PC(USA) due to unintentional differences in the way women are employed and compensated, and (b) remedy unjust disparities where they exist. Other recommendations reaffirm the Presbyterian Church's long-standing commitment to women's equality in society and its on-going public witness in support of that commitment.

1. *Biblical and Theological Foundations:* The PC(USA) has repeatedly affirmed the equality of women and men as evidenced by the biblical account of the creation of humanity, male and female, both created in the image and likeness of God. It has challenged social and ecclesiastical practices that would deny the equal partnership of women and men in the work of the church or of society. It has called upon the Church and its members to act in society to bring about the end of discrimination against women.

In addition, the PC(USA) embraces a Reformed theology of work in which the work of men and women is understood as participation in God's work of sustaining and healing creation, creating covenant community, and serving neighbor. Therefore, the Church has established principles related to work that call for just employment practices and compensation that support a life with dignity and security. The Church has identified poverty as "a moral scandal of misdistribution and unsustainability" (*Hope for a Global Future, Minutes*, 1996, Part I, pp.546-547) and has been particularly concerned about "the feminization of poverty." To end the burden of poverty that women and children bear disproportionately, the Church has called for particular attention to "economic justice for women" (*Minutes*, 1983, Part I, p.360). It has called systems that translate "unalterable human differences – race, gender, age, and physical ability – into occasion for oppression, exploitation, and hopelessness . . . incompatible with Reformed theology" (*Minutes*, 1995, Part I, pp. 59, 426). What the Church sees prophetically as the basis for a just society is also a prophetic challenge to the Church's own practices as employer.

2. *Understanding Pay Equity:* Since the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, of 1964, the law has required employers to pay employees the same if they are doing the same work for the same employer, regardless of the gender, race, or ethnicity of the worker:

equal pay for equal work. However, women and men do not usually do the *same* work. Historical concepts of appropriate work for women or, conversely, appropriate for men, continue to result in a highly gender-segregated workforce. More than half of all women workers are concentrated in female-dominated occupations such as child care workers, receptionists, caregivers, bookkeepers, LPNs, and retail clerks. Studies that compare gender- and race-segregated jobs with other jobs have shown that (a) workers in gender- and race-segregated jobs earn less than workers with similar educations and skills in other jobs, (b) even when the characteristics of jobs are similar, jobs held primarily by white males pay more than jobs held primarily by women or racial/ethnic men, and (c) as the percentage of women or racial/ethnic workers increases in a job category, the average wage for workers in that category declines.

Consequently, the concept of *pay equity* has come to mean a management strategy by which the relevant characteristics of different jobs are evaluated and compared. Jobs that are different, but which have similar relevant characteristics (such as level of education, knowledge and experience required, skill level, working conditions, and so forth) are evaluated as similar. Employees in different jobs which are rated similarly would be paid similarly. The goal of pay equity is to base compensation on the actual value of the work being done and to eliminate unjust disparities in compensation due to traditional stereotypes about the value of work that women mostly do.

Today in the U.S., almost 50 percent of the workforce is female; almost 60 percent of all working-age women are employed; about 50 percent of all wives are employed; and almost 75 percent of all single mothers are employed. Today, women (like men) work outside the home both for reasons of personal fulfillment and social contribution and for reasons of economic necessity for the maintenance of their families. Yet, a significant and persistent wage gap continues to exist between men and women. In 2005, the median annual earnings of a full-time, full-year woman worker was 77 percent of that of a full-time, full-year male worker. The gap for African-American and Hispanic-American women workers is even larger. The size of the wage gap has remained relatively stable since the mid 1990's.

Such a disparity in compensation has enormous consequences for women and their families. For example, over a forty-year career, this gap results in a disparity of \$523,000 with significant consequences for old-age security. It is estimated that the income of almost 40 percent of poor white women and almost 50 percent of poor racial/ethnic women would rise above the poverty level if women's work was paid equitably. In recognition of the injustice of the gender wage disparity, the 196th General Assembly (1984) adopted a *Resolution on Equal Pay for Work of Comparable Worth* which endorsed “. . . the concept of equal pay for jobs of comparable worth as a particularly effective means of obtaining economic justice for women” (*Minutes*, 1984, Part I, p.508).

*God's Work in Women's Hands* also recognizes that there are causes of the gender wage disparity which cannot be resolved through the implementation of a pay equity strategy because they are not related to gender discrimination on the job, the gender segregation of jobs, or stereotypes about the value of women's work. For example, the clash between employment responsibilities and family responsibilities, mostly experienced by women, impacts the context in which women must make choices. Some women must choose to limit

their employment hours or types of work in order to carry out their family responsibilities. Pay equity cannot address this issue directly. To the extent that women lag behind men in educational attainment and job experience, i.e., differences in what is generally called “human capital,” a wage disparity would also be expected. However, it should be noted that research shows that even after differences in human capital are taken into account, 30-50 percent of the wage gap remains unexplained. It should also be noted that the acceptance of secular levels of inequality in the Church is something that may be addressed in the recommendation for new attention to the theology of compensation.

3. *Pay Equity in Religious Organizations:* To what extent do such unintentional gender disparities in employment and compensation exist within the Church? Frankly, without a comprehensive study of church practices, this question cannot be answered accurately. Most of the recommendations of this study are designed to help the PCUSA at all levels make such a study so that this question can be answered and the work of the Church can be done justly.

Several presbyteries cooperated with the resolution team as it attempted to discern the state of the Church with regard to a gender wage disparity. Due to limitations within the data, these findings can only be suggestive:

- Male clergy earn substantially more than female clergy; white clergy earn substantially more than racial/ethnic clergy;
- Women clergy are less likely to be heads of staff than are male clergy;
- Women and racial/ethnic clergy have fewer years of service than do men and white clergy;
- Men and white clergy serve in larger congregations than do women and racial/ethnic clergy;
- Women and racial/ethnic clergy work part-time more often than do male and white clergy.

The data from these presbyteries show that women clergy earn 27 percent less than male clergy and racial/ethnic clergy earn 26 percent less than white clergy. However, more comprehensive data would need to be analyzed to explain more accurately the reasons for these disparities and the role of gender or race stereotypes, if any, in these disparities.

Data from the Board of Pensions provided information on the average salaries of clergy by size of congregation and, within each size, by gender and years of service. Key findings from this data show:

- Women clergy have a lower effective salary than men as pastors and associate pastors in almost all congregational size categories;
- A substantial wage difference, nearly \$21,000, exists between male and female pastors with 10 years or less of service in congregations with 501-1,000 members.

Information from the Church Leadership Connection indicates that:

- Over an eight year period, women were 50 percent or more of candidates for ministry, but only one-third of active ministers;
- Between 2000 – 2005, the share of pastors, co-pastors, and associate pastors who were women remained nearly constant;
- In no synod do women represent more than 26 percent of ministers.

This data analysis is preliminary and provisional. It suggests that there are factors in the way terms of call are decided and in the way decisions are made about what positions are offered to which candidates that are not conducive to gender and racial/ethnic equity. However, without a comprehensive dataset, it is impossible to draw substantiated conclusions about the experiences of women and racial/ethnic clergy in the PC(USA) today. Consequently, the recommendations of this study are to do the data gathering and analysis that would enable the church to determine if unjustified disparities exist and, if so, to remedy them.

### Recommendations:

The 218th General Assembly (2008) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.):

1. As “the provisional demonstration of what God intends for all of humanity” (*Book of Order*, G-3.0200), commends the PC(USA)’s commitment to the equality of women in society and church, to ending discrimination against women, and to economic justice for women through “equal pay for jobs of comparable worth” (*Minutes*, 1984, Part I, p. 508).
2. As a demonstration of “the new reality in Christ” through “the quality of its common life” (*Book of Order*, G-3.0300c(2)), approves the following recommendations to uncover and correct unjustified pay disparities in the church caused by gender and/or race stereotypes:
  - a. That local congregations participate in the PC(USA)’s goal of assuring gender equity in pay by doing the following:
    - (1) fully completing and submitting in a timely manner the Session Annual Statistical Report and the Change in Terms of Call;
    - (2) using the data and tools of their presbytery, and the counsel of the committee on ministry, to evaluate the equity of their level of clergy compensation, with particular regard to women clergy and racial/ethnic clergy;
    - (3) assuring that unjustified pay disparities do not exist between male and female employees or white and racial/ethnic employees who are doing comparable work;
    - (4) prorating the compensation and benefits of part-time workers with full-time equivalents; and
    - (5) where women clergy are not employed, providing the congregation with the experience of women clergy leadership by, for example, inviting women clergy to serve as pulpit supply and in other leadership capacities.

b. That presbyteries participate in the PC(USA)'s goal of assuring gender equity in pay by doing the following:

- (1) reviewing annually the terms of call of pastors in order to assess whether stereotypical patterns about race, ethnicity, and gender unfairly affect terms or task assignments;
- (2) using evaluative tools to be provided by the Office of Vocation to determine if unjustified pay disparities exist among clergy of the presbytery due to gender or race/ethnicity;
- (3) aiding congregations in their understanding of pay equity issues, including ways that inequitable compensation contributes to differential impacts on families of all racial/ethnic backgrounds;
- (4) developing an annual report to the presbytery identifying the ratio of gender representation by staff position (including support staff) in small-, medium-, and large-sized congregations;
- (5) setting progressive goals toward equal gender and racial/ethnic representation at all levels of church leadership within the presbytery;
- (6) using the tools of a pay equity study to determine whether unjustified pay disparities exist among the presbytery's male and female employees or white and racial/ethnic employees who are doing comparable work; and
- (7) establishing mentoring programs in Committees on Preparation for Ministry for women candidates.

c. That the Board of Pensions (BOP) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) participate in the PC(USA)'s goal of assuring gender equity in pay for clergy by providing the following data from members' annual reports to entities of the PC(USA) as requested for pay equity studies: total effective salary, gender and race/ethnicity of clergy member, year of ordination, position held, part-time or full-time, presbytery and size of congregation served.

d. That the Presbyterian Foundation (FDN), Presbyterian Publishing Corporation (PPC), Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program, Inc. (PILP), and Board of Pensions (BOP) participate in the PC(USA)'s goal of assuring gender equity in pay for its employees by providing the following data to entities of the PC(USA) as requested for pay equity studies: salary, position held, part-time or full-time, gender and race/ethnicity, date of hire, and highest level of educational achievement.

e. That the General Assembly Council (GAC) and the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) participate in the PC(USA)'s goal of assuring gender equity in pay for its employees, including mission personnel, by providing the following data to entities of the PC(USA) as requested for pay equity studies: salary, position held, part-time or full-time, gender and race/ethnicity, date of hire, and highest level of educational achievement.

f. That the Office of Vocation, in consultation with the Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns (ACWC), presbyteries, and congregations, participate in the PC(USA)'s goal of assuring gender equity in pay for clergy by developing by 2010 a tool to enable presbyteries' committees on ministry to analyze clergy terms of call and compensation offers for pay equity purposes; and that this tool be placed on the PC(USA) Website that would include a place for presbyteries' committees on ministry accessing the tool to register their interest; and that the Office of Vocation report on the use of this tool to each General Assembly through 2020.

g. That the Office of Vocation, in consultation with the Office for Cultural Proficiency, participate in the PC(USA)'s goal of assuring gender equity in pay for clergy by developing and providing on-going training modules for committees on ministry and the councils of presbyteries and synods with regard to gender and racial/ethnic sensitivity in hiring and employment practices. Such training modules should include the identification of discriminatory questions and stereotypical assumptions in interviews about women's abilities to fulfill essential aspects of the position as well as ways to ensure that task assignments do not disproportionately assign women clergy to caring and nurturing activities and men to decision-making and leadership positions; and that this guidance be placed on the PC(USA)'s Website; and that the Office of Vocation report on its development and promotion to the 219th General Assembly (2010).

h. That the Office of Vocation and Racial Ethnic and Women's Ministries/ Presbyterian Women, in consultation with the Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns (ACWC) and the Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns (ACREC), participate in the PC(USA)'s goal of assuring gender pay equity by designing a program for women clergy interested in preparing to serve as heads of staff; and that the Office of Vocation report on this program to the 219th General Assembly (2010).

i. That the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP), in consultation with Theology, Worship, and Education Ministry Area and the Office of Vocation, update the PC(USA)'s 1983 "Theology of Compensation" report (*Minutes*, 1983, Part I, pp. 82, 116, 689-704) to provide theological guidance to church and society with regard particularly to the impact of secular market assumptions on the compensation practices of the PC(USA).

j. That the Human Resources Department and the Offices of Racial Ethnic & Women's Ministries/Presbyterian Women, in consultation with the Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns (ACWC) and other appropriate entities, participate in the PC(USA)'s goal of assuring gender pay equity by conducting a pay equity study covering the employees of the General Assembly Council (GAC) and the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) and report the results of this study to the 220th General Assembly (2012).

k. That seminaries, Presbyterian Colleges, Universities and Schools participate in the PC(USA)'s goal of assuring gender equality by implementing a pay equity study for seminary employees and by developing educational opportunities, including curricular content and continuing education programs, to prepare women clergy to serve at all levels of church leadership.

l. That Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI) participate in the PC(USA)'s goal of assuring gender pay equity by including pay equity and equal gender representation as criteria in its evaluation and monitoring of the businesses in which the church invests.

m. That the Theology, Worship, and Education Ministry Area, in consultation with Racial Ethnic and Women's Ministries/Presbyterian Women, prepare and distribute a user-friendly instrument based on the Reformed tenets of our faith for helping congregations achieve racial, ethnic, and gender justice in compensation and other employment issues.

n. That Presbyterian retirement centers review criteria for residence to assure that women are not disadvantaged.

o. That the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly communicate the PC(USA)'s appreciation to the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) for their global efforts on behalf of women's equality.

3. For the "promotion of social righteousness, and the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world" (*Book of Order*, G-1.0200), commends the PC(USA)'s commitment to women's equality in society by

a. recommitting itself to the support of institutional policies and legislation that would:

(1) expand women's civil protections to include equal pay for work of comparable worth;

(2) provide prorated compensation and benefits for part-time employees;

(3) heal work/family conflict through adequate financial support for those providing childcare and elder care, more flexible work hours, paid medical and family leave, family-supporting wages for all workers, and universal access to quality health care;

(4) establish quality education as a basic human right;

(5) uncover and eliminate racial bias in hiring and employment practices;

(6) reduce the growing inequality in wages, benefits, and wealth; and

b. directing the Presbyterian Washington Office (PWO) and the Presbyterian United Nations Office (PUNO) to advocate for ratification of the Equal Remuneration Convention;

c. urging synods, presbyteries congregations, and individuals to advocate for local, state, and federal legislation that support these policies; and

d. directing the Stated Clerk to publish the entire report, "God's Work in Women's Hands," in the *Minutes* and the Office of the General Assembly to place the report on the PC(USA)'s Website.

*(Item 09-08. This action derived from a resolution developed by the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy, in consultation with the Advisory Committee on Women's Concerns.)*

***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 ... 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 Social Creed for the Twenty-First Century

### **Response to Smithfield Food Labor Situation**

In light of the continuing pattern of mutual suspicion, intimidating litigation, and labor tension, despite some apparent improvements in worker safety, the 218th General Assembly (2008):

1. Directs that an appropriate program body of the General Assembly Council (GAC) continue to monitor the situation at the Tar Heel plant, consulting with a joint committee of persons from both presbyteries, possibly including persons of management and labor background, and reporting to the GAC itself in 2009.
2. Requests that the General Assembly Council (GAC) make a report to the 219th General Assembly (2010), drawing from the consulting group, a staff liaison, and other research, and making recommendations, if warranted, concerning actions Presbyterians may take.
3. Commends the representatives of the presbyteries and the management and labor representatives for their willingness to engage in dialogue and provide information in order to obtain a better understanding of each other's perspectives and that of the church.

*(Item 09-19. This action derived from a recommendation developed by the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy.)*

## **II. JUSTICE AND COMPASSION FOR VULNERABLE PERSONS**

***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 ... [the] abatement of hunger and poverty, and enactment of policies benefiting the most vulnerable ...***

A Social Creed for the Twenty-First Century

## **On Mobilizing Presbyterians for a Significant Response to the Global Food Crisis**

The 218th General Assembly (2008) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) urgently [resolves to] take the following steps in response to the global food crisis:

1. Launch a general appeal to all Presbyterians to donate to a special fund set up by the General Assembly Council to enable the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to provide better support to and accompaniment of our overseas partners trying to step up their response to the global food crisis.
2. Step up and speed up mission personnel deployment, in response to overseas partners who so request, to advise and accompany them as to the kinds of actions that could be undertaken to alleviate hunger in the short term without creating new dependencies and/or compromising their countries' sovereignty and economy.
3. Invite all Presbyterians to join in the church-wide practice of spiritual disciplines, such as monthly fasting for repentance and reflection, which may lead to meaningful coordinated actions to accompany those who are poor and hungry around the world.
4. Produce relevant resources, using all available communications means, to raise the awareness of Presbyterians about the current food crisis, including the dangers for the U.S. government, the European Union, and other international entities who want to use the current food crisis as an opportunity to offer more direct food aid exports and genetically modified (GMO) seeds to affected countries, instead of offering economic and financial assistance to enable them to increase the production and marketing of their own traditional food commodities.
5. Call on the Stated Clerk and on appropriate entities of the General Assembly Council (GAC) to contact the U.S. government, the World Bank, and other relevant institutions, to call for the continued pursuit of debt relief as well as an immediate increase in their financial assistance for food aid and agricultural development in developing countries.

*(Item 11-30. This action derived from a Commissioners' Resolution; approved as amended.)*

## **On Emergency Food Aid to North Korea**

The 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2008) resolves that the General Assembly Council, through its appropriate offices, be instructed to provide immediate food assistance to alleviate the sufferings of the people in North Korea.

*(Item 11-32. This action derived from a Commissioners' Resolution.)*

*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 ... high quality public education for all and universal, affordable and accessible healthcare ...*

## COMFORT MY PEOPLE: A POLICY STATEMENT ON SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS

### Executive Summary

This paper focuses on issues explored by the Task force on Serious Mental Illness, while noting a broader disabilities policy, *Living into the Body of Christ: Towards Full Inclusion of People with Disabilities*, (Minutes, 2006, Part I, pp. 50,919-939). This report speaks to individuals of all faiths, communions, social, private, and public groups.

The Task Force on Serious Mental Illness traveled across the United States gathering information from biblical scholars, medical personnel, mental health professionals, hospital chaplains, and persons with mental illness, including some in a hospital setting. This fact finding process was astounding as connections between serious mental illness and other social ills were documented, including homelessness, addiction, domestic violence, suicide, HIV/AIDS, lack of adequate treatment in prisons, veteran neglect, cultural, racial and gender biases. Congregations may, for example, deal with returning veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), or send visitors to prisons where 25% of inmates may suffer from mental disorders. Mental institutions will release people living with serious mental illness even though these soon-to-be former patients may not have a comprehensive and safe plan of care. Furthermore, at the writing of this report, the United States Congress still had not passed a bill providing parity in health care coverage for persons with mental illness. This need for parity is a primary social justice concern for public policy advocacy in the church.

This report acknowledges that definitions of “mental illness” and “serious mental illness” vary greatly. In fact, the standard diagnostic manual used by mental health professionals does not make a distinction between serious mental illnesses and non-serious ones.<sup>1</sup> In the 20th Century, the Presbyterian and other ‘mainline’ churches pioneered in supporting the development of pastoral counseling and Clinical Pastoral Education, greatly improving hospital ministry and care for persons in crisis, depression, or grief. The Task Force’s mandate, however, was to focus on serious mental illness. The Task Force recommends the following definitions of mental and serious mental illnesses:

1. *Mental Illness* is a medical disorder characterized by disturbance in thought, mood, or behavior that causes distress or impairment of spiritual, interpersonal, behavioral, and emotional functioning. If left untreated, all mental illnesses are impairing.

2. *Serious Mental Illnesses* are severe and persistent medical disorders characterized by impairment through mood or behavior that cause distress and/or impairment in spiritual, interpersonal, and behavioral functioning. Salient examples are the disorders known as schizophrenia, bi-polar disorder, and major depressions. Characteristic symptoms of serious mental illness include hallucinations, delusions, disorganized thinking, extreme mood changes, overwhelming hopelessness and sadness, severely impaired perception, judgment, or insight, and problems with concentration and attention. Serious mental illness is an enduring condition that affects one's ability to cope with everyday challenges. If left untreated all mental illnesses may impair one's ability to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships, practice one's faith, worship God, attend school, go to work, or live independently.

The biblical image of "exile" guides this policy statement. After offering comprehensive working definitions of mental illness and serious mental illness, the paper provides an account of the historical context focusing on two major themes. The first, "The Land of Exile," explores the difficulties and injustices endured by people with serious mental illness. The experience of mental illness disorders people's lives in ways that exile them from themselves, their families, and their community. Jesus' ministry is seen to include a mixture of physical, psychological and spiritual healing and restoration of the afflicted person to new relationship and community.

The second theme, "God's Call to Comfort," focuses on appropriate ways congregations can minister with and to people with a serious mental illness. Throughout this report, people are understood from a Christian incarnational perspective, called to be delivered from chaos and disorder into the wholeness and communion of salvation. At the same time, as suggested by the definitions, the report recognizes the validity and importance of the "medical model," with its gifts of bio-chemical medication and social-scientific analysis. The goal of restoration from exile includes the integration of both perspectives and the renewal of a healthier culture and society. Particular attention is given to the problem of suicide, issues around involuntary commitment, obstacles to treatment, and the impacts of poverty and disaster.

Because this report will be read to give hope to those suffering from mental illness and their families, stories are included from various perspectives that illumine and give depth to this policy statement. The stories have been altered to conceal the identities of the people in them. The stories focus on real life challenges that people living with serious mental illness, as well as their loved ones or caregivers, experience too frequently. These challenges include: (a) the perception that people living with a mental illness are troublemakers and/or more violent than other people; (b) those living with a serious mental illness who not seek the medical help they need because of the stigma associated with this health challenge; and (c) how spiritual language may be used to explain a mental or serious mental condition. Above all, however, these stories build empathy and teach both endurance and "tested and true" approaches to sometimes heart-breaking challenges.

*Comfort My People* includes a section on "specific peoples and specific exiles": children and youth, rural populations, veterans, women and men, and racial and ethnic populations. The Task Force thought it was important to include this topic in order to stress the unique challenges that different populations experience, and their distinctive histories in addressing

mental and serious mental illness challenges in their families and communities. For example, the report affirms that the disparity in access to social power renders women more vulnerable to some mental illnesses than men. In addition to other cultural diversity considerations like language, gender, geographic location, and physical ability, race and ethnicity affect mental health care. If religious and secular institutions want to effectively address the needs of all God's children living with serious mental illness, these institutions cannot ignore the unique challenges that specific populations face regarding this health challenge.

Jesus provided healing and wholeness to the sick. This report calls on the church to emulate him in concern for people living with serious mental illness. It includes many resources for further study and wise care. Out of gratitude for all that God has done through Jesus Christ and the indwelling Comforter, we call the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), through this policy, "Comfort My People," to seek out those who have been exiled by serious mental illness, to comfort them, and welcome them into full participation in the church.

Endnote:

1 American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition, Text Revision* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 2000).

The 218th General Assembly (2008) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.):

1. Commends *Resolution on the Church and Serious Mental Illness* approved by the 200th General Assembly (1988) (*Minutes*, 1988, Part I, pp. 443-46).
2. Approves the following recommendations related to *Comfort My People: A Policy Statement on Serious Mental Illness*:
  - a. Approve the policy statement and recommendations.
  - b. Receive the background sections and appendixes.
  - c. Approve the report as a whole for churchwide study and use.
  - d. Direct the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) to publish the entire report *Comfort My People: A Policy Statement on Serious Mental Illness* with appendixes and a related study/action guide; distribute it to the middle governing bodies and their resource centers, to sessions, and to libraries of the Presbyterian theological seminaries; and make additional copies available for sale to aid study and implementation efforts in the church.
  - e. Commend the members of the Task Force on Serious Mental Illness, the Synod Consultation on *Comfort My People: A Policy Statement on Serious Mental Illness*, the staff of the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP), and the many individuals and groups who offered comments and suggestions in the development of this report on behalf of the whole church.
3. Approves the following definitions of (a) mental illness and (b) serious mental illness:

a. *Mental Illness* is a medical disorder characterized by disturbance in thought, mood, or behavior that causes distress or impairment of spiritual, interpersonal, behavioral, and emotional functioning. If left untreated, all mental illnesses are impairing.

b. *Serious Mental Illnesses* are severe and persistent medical disorders characterized by impairment in mood or behavior that cause distress and/or impairment in spiritual, interpersonal, and behavioral functioning. Salient examples are the disorders known as schizophrenia, bi-polar disorder, and major depression. Characteristic symptoms of serious mental illness include hallucinations, delusions, disorganized thinking, extreme mood changes, overwhelming hopelessness and sadness, severely impaired perception, judgment, or insight, and problems with concentration and attention. Serious mental illness is an enduring condition that affects one's ability to cope with everyday challenges. If left untreated all mental illnesses may impair one's ability to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships, practice one's faith, worship God, attend school, go to work, or live independently. All mental illnesses can be impairing.

4. Directs the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly to send a letter commending the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO), the American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC), the American Hospital Association (AHA), the American Nurses Association (ANA), the American Psychiatric Association (APA), the American Psychological Association (APA), and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) for including spiritual assessment and religious history when designing care plans fully informed by cultural awareness.

5. Directs the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly to send a letter encouraging middle governing bodies, sessions, and individual members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and its ecumenical partners to give prayerful attention to this policy statement as a help in responding to serious mental illness in their families, congregations, and in the communities where they live, minister, and work.

6. Urges presbyteries to do the following:

a. Provide educational opportunities for members to learn about treatment, counseling, ministry with people with serious mental illnesses, and how to address the stigma of serious mental illness in their congregations, particularly in regard to the experiences of children and youth, women and men, the elderly, and racial ethnic groups.

b. Provide training for pastors, staff, and lay care providers to help them develop appropriate identification and intervention strategies for persons at risk for suicide, especially teenagers, young adults, and the elderly.

c. Provide continuing education for pastors, staff, and lay care providers to train them to recognize and intervene when a person with a serious mental illness also abuses drugs, including alcohol.

d. Provide continuing education opportunities for pastors to help them learn how to support and advocate for families in crisis and to make appropriate treatment referrals.

e. Require mandatory continuing education credits for pastors on issues of pastoral care such as serious mental illness, addiction, domestic violence, child abuse, and other pertinent health care issues.

f. Encourage pastors to become aware of the quality of services provided at local treatment facilities by consulting with administrators and care providers of those facilities, touring those facilities, and talking with people who receive such services.

g. Encourage pastors to preach sermons and provide Bible studies about serious mental illness.

h. Support the ministry and witness of the Presbyterian Serious Mental Illness Network (PSMIN), Presbyterians for Addiction and Action (PAA), and the Presbyterian Association of Specialized Pastoral Ministries (PASPM) of the Presbyterian Health, Education, and Welfare Association (PHEWA), and Pathways to Promise, and encourage pastors and local sessions to do the same.

i. Encourage pastors to learn about the resources of the Veterans Administration (VA), as well as the needs of veterans of all ages, genders, and ethnicity.

7. Urges committees on preparation for ministry (CPMs), in consultation with the Office of Vocation of the General Assembly Council (GAC) and the Office of the General Assembly (OGA), to do the following:

a. Educate themselves about serious mental illness in order to help discern the call of individuals under care with understanding and compassion. This discernment should include consideration as to whether this person can be effective in the ministry of Word and Sacrament.

b. Assist individuals under care to find resources and support for any serious mental health concerns.

c. Explore alternative means for administering ordination exams among the range of tools for assessing readiness for ministry, if an inquirer or candidate does not pass ordination exams.

d. Encourage uniform standards and a uniform process for the psychological evaluation of candidates for ministry.

e. Require candidates for ministry and commissioned lay pastors (CLPs) to have successfully completed at least one unit of accredited clinical pastoral education (CPE).

8. Encourages committees on ministry (COMs) to do the following:

a. Educate themselves for early identification of pastors who may have a serious mental illness.

b. Develop more effective early intervention strategies and follow-up in dealing with pastors, sessions, and congregations when serious mental illness may be involved.

9. Urges sessions and congregations to do the following:

a. Prominently display educational material regarding serious mental illness, such as location and times for local meetings of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), such as support groups and family-to-family training.

b. Display pamphlets from national advocacy groups such as Pathways to Promise, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Presbyterian Health, Education and Welfare Association (PHEWA), and the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI).

c. Subscribe to newsletters or web-based information updates from agencies listed above and post in newsletter/bulletin boards.

d. Provide support [to] and advocate for individuals and families affected by serious mental illness.

e. Provide meeting room space for support groups and guidance for prayer-based support programs.

f. Consider forming a relationship with a local chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) for the purpose of fostering relationships between members of the congregations, their families, and people with serious mental illness.

g. Advocate for establishment or funding of not-for-profit agencies, counseling centers, and treatment programs for persons who struggle with mental illness, including those with dual diagnoses of alcohol and drug abuse.

h. Work to end the stigma of serious mental illness within the congregation and in the surrounding community.

i. Invite local mental health professionals to address serious mental illness in small groups and in worship services, and encourage family members with serious mental illness to attend them.

j. Create a church environment open to the transforming work of God where people know confidences will be kept and they will be accepted and supported when they ask for help.

k. In underserved areas, advocate for greater availability of mental health resources.

l. Encourage all members to prepare a Psychiatric Advance Directive (PAD), which specifies plans for their treatment in case of a mental health emergency. (See Appendix D in the full report for an example of a PAD.)

- m. Gain a deeper awareness of our own perceptions and attitudes regarding mental illness by making use of the recommendations here as well as the information provided in the background (rationale) section of this report.
  - n. Encourage greater awareness regarding race, ethnicity, gender, name, age, and language as these relate to persons with a serious mental illness.
  - o. Advocate for housing for people living with a serious mental illness.
  - p. Encourage local sessions to adopt specific psychiatric units for prayer support, visits (when permitted), and material donations.
  - q. Conduct acts of worship recognizing Serious Mental Illness Awareness when designated in the *Presbyterian Planning Calendar*, Mental Health Awareness Month (May), and Serious Mental Illness Awareness Week (the first week in October).
  - r. Support the ministry and witness of the Presbyterian Serious Mental Illness Network (PSMIN), Presbyterians for Addiction and Action (PAA), and the Presbyterian Association of Specialized Pastoral Ministries (PASPM) of the Presbyterian Health, Education, and Welfare Association (PHEWA), and Pathways to Promise, and encourage pastors and local sessions to do the same.
  - s. Encourage local hospitals to design comprehensive discharge plans for all psychiatric patients and to collaborate in and monitor the full implementation of these plans with available social service agencies post discharge.
  - t. Support church-based counseling services staffed by mental health professionals.
  - u. Support and advocate for resources to assist veterans such as: the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), Disabled American Veterans (DAV), and The American Legion.
  - v. Inform and encourage veterans within the congregation to seek available resources to help them such as: the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), Disabled American Veterans (DAV), and The American Legion.
  - w. Become active in helping members of the congregation prepare a Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP).
10. Encourages the Presbyterian Health, Education, and Welfare Association (PHEWA) to establish a churchwide web-based network of congregations who are engaged in ministries with persons and families affected by serious mental illness.
11. Directs the Presbyterian Washington Office (PWO) [to] do the following:
- a. Advocate for federal legislation that would increase and improve availability of mental health services in under-served areas.

- b. Advocate for federal legislation that would increase and improve care for vulnerable, high-need groups in racial and ethnic populations. Such legislation should include an increase in the number of multilingual and minority mental health practitioners.
- c. Advocate for federal legislation aimed at reducing the alarmingly high rate of suicides among elderly people. In addition to traditional psychological and medical interventions/treatments, efforts should be directed to reducing many of the social problems of the elderly, such as isolation and poverty that exacerbate mental illness.
- d. Advocate for federal legislation that would create health maintenance systems for persons with a serious mental illness to reduce symptom relapse and suicide risk.
- e. Advocate for federal legislation that requires parity in the coverage of mental health care and general health care, so that mental illnesses are covered on the same terms as other illnesses.
- f. Advocate for federal legislation that would increase and improve the Veterans Administration (VA)'s ability to care for veterans with mental illness.

12. Directs the Presbyterian United Nations Office (PUNO) to do the following:

- a. Advocate for international human rights treaties that would protect the rights of persons with a mental illness.
- b. Advocate for international human rights treaties that would improve mental health care universally.

13. Urges the Board of Pensions (BOP) to maintain its practice of providing benefits parity for treatment of mental illness.

14. Urges Presbyterian theological institutions and those related to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) by covenant agreement to do the following:

- a. Instruct students about the spiritual and social dimensions of mental health, and equip them to recognize the signs of mental illness and inform them of available treatments.
- b. Instruct students about the most recent medical research and findings regarding the causes of mental and serious mental illnesses.
- c. Instruct students on how to listen to, pray for, and follow-up with people who have a serious mental illness crisis and their families, including how to make appropriate referrals.
- d. Encourage those who are training to be worship leaders to use sermons and stories to educate their congregations about mental health and mental illness, and also to plan worship that celebrates occasions for mental health awareness.

e. Provide educational opportunities about public advocacy issues affecting people with serious mental illness.

15. Directs the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, stated clerks of middle governing bodies, stated clerks of local sessions, and individual Presbyterians to:

a. Urge local police to be trained to respond justly and humanely to persons with serious mental illness.

b. Urge the department of corrections to recognize and respond appropriately to the needs of inmates with serious mental illness and provide timely, accessible, and high-quality treatment for incarcerated persons with serious mental illness.

c. Support treatment and care facilities as alternatives to incarceration for persons with serious mental illness.

d. Urge careful planning for the release of prisoners so they receive immediate and intensive short-term support.

e. Encourage the criminal justice system to incorporate an evaluation for serious mental illness in sentencing and release guidelines.

f. Urge continuing education requirements and training programs for legal professionals so they can keep well-informed about treatments for persons affected by serious mental illness.

16. Directs [the] General Assembly Council to provide certified chaplains and/or pastoral counselors in collaboration with the Presbyterian Association of Specialized Pastoral Ministries (PASPM) at large Presbyterian gatherings such as the Peacemaking Conference, the Youth Triennium, the triennial gathering of Presbyterian Women and the biennial meeting of the General Assembly.

*(Item 10-05. This action derived from a resolution developed by the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy; approved as amended.)*

### **On Supporting Single-Payer Universal Health Care Reform**

The 218th General Assembly (2008):

1. Endorses in principle the provision of single-payer universal health care reform in which health care services are privately provided and publicly financed

2. Directs the General Assembly Council, through appropriate offices including National Health Ministries, the Washington Office, and the Presbyterian Health, Education, and Welfare Association (PHEWA), to advocate for, educate about, and otherwise pursue the goal of obtaining legislation that enacts single-payer, universal national health insurance as

the program that best responds to the moral imperative of the gospel; [and to monitor] progress toward this goal and [report] back to the next two General Assemblies (2010 and 2012).

3. Directs the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly to send a copy of this resolution to the appropriate committee chairs of the U.S. Congress and to the Washington and United Nations offices of the PC(USA).
4. Directs that \$25,000 from the Mission budget of the PC(USA) be sent to the PACT Network of PHEWA for the purpose of holding ten regional, one-day seminars supporting single-payer universal health care reform, moneys to be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.

*(Item 10-06. This action derived from an overture from the Presbytery of Pittsburgh; approved as amended.)*

### **On Developing and Funding a Comprehensive HIV and AIDS Policy for the PC(USA)**

The 218th General Assembly (2008), recognizing that the HIV and AIDS pandemic is a critical matter of our faith and God's justice, directs the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP), in consultation with appropriate General Assembly Council staff, PC(USA) networks, and church partners, to develop and fully fund a comprehensive study on HIV and AIDS for the PC(USA), recommending compassionate action and giving prophetic witness regarding issues related to people living with HIV and AIDS in the U.S.A. and around the world, and report to the 219th General Assembly (2010).

*(Item 10-02. This action derived from an overture from the Presbytery of the Pacific; approved as amended, with a comment urging theological diversity among persons appointed to the study group.)*

### **Public Education for the 21st Century**

The 218th General Assembly (2008) directs the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy, in partnership with the Office of Child Advocacy and in consultation with the Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns, to create a resolution team to study the church's policies on public education in relationship to the issues of desegregation, affirmative action, faith-based initiatives, home schooling, charter schools, and the No Child Left Behind law, with attention to class as well as race; making appropriate recommendations that would be presented to the 219th General Assembly (2010) and, if appropriate, subsequently preparing a study guide for individual and congregational use.

*(Item 09-06. This action derived from a resolution developed by the Advocacy Committee on Racial-Ethnic Concerns; approved as amended.)*

***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 ... tax and budget policies that reduce disparities between rich and poor, strengthen democracy, and provide greater opportunity for everyone within the common good.***

A Social Creed for the Twenty-First Century

### **On Addressing Intergenerational Injustice in America**

The 218th General Assembly (2008):

1. Declares that federal government practices and policies that create ever-increasing debt and unfunded or underfunded obligations for future generations of Americans are a grave moral concern as well as a clear danger to the republic.
2. Calls upon public leaders to have the courage to address this economic and moral crisis while there is still time.
3. Calls upon individual Presbyterians, sessions, presbyteries, and agencies of General Assembly to study, pray, and speak words of justice and morality into the present situation and to defend future generations who have no defense. We do not at this time call upon General Assembly agencies to prepare study documents or study papers, and we do not propose that the church at this time have a monolithic policy recommendation. We do call upon the church and the nation to study the policies and practices that have created this grave moral and economic crisis, to repent of the sins of greed and of stealing from future generations who cannot defend themselves, and to call upon our citizens and national leaders to make the sacrifices necessary to begin to solve this problem before it is too late.
4. Calls on the nation for a day of prayer on this issue.

*(Item 09-01. This action derived from an overture from the Presbytery of New Covenant.)*

***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 ... just immigration policies that protect family unity, safeguard workers' rights, require employer accountability, and foster international cooperation.***

A Social Creed for the Twenty-First Century

## **A Resolution to Study Immigration Detention in the U.S.**

The 218th General Assembly (2008):

1. Directs the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP), in consultation with the appropriate General Assembly Council (GAC) and Office of the General Assembly (OGA) ministries areas, to analyze the social witness policy of the PC(USA) regarding detention in relation to immigration in the United States, giving attention to the experiences of women and children detained and affected; and [to] report its findings and recommendations to the 219th General Assembly (2010).
2. Urges the Office of General Assembly and General Assembly Council to
  - a. support the program work of the Office of Immigration Issues, and provide adequate financial support for the development of resources regarding detention and immigration; and
  - b. support regional study seminars across the church focusing on detention and immigration and promote these events with connectional structures as appropriate.
3. Directs the Washington Office and the Office of Immigration Issues to
  - a. partner with ecumenical and interfaith entities to build/join in coalitions against detention; and
  - b. advocate for alternatives to detention.

*(Item 09-11. This action derived from a resolution developed by the Advocacy Committee on Women's Concerns.)*

## **On Local Enforcement of National Immigration Laws That Adversely Affect Local Congregations**

The 218th General Assembly (2008):

1. Declares that the common practice of police officers working in collaboration with federal government institutions to enforce immigration laws represents a dangerous situation for families and the community in general.
2. Declares that raids and roadblocks near churches are unjust and represent a violation [of] people's right to worship.
3. Denounces the suffering and hurting of thousands of young children and parents [as a result of] separation [caused by] deportations.
4. Denounces the injustice and the lack of standards in detention centers.

5. Deplores hate speech against immigrants in public arenas.
6. States that the PC(USA) believes that all humans should have access to basic human needs like health, education, and housing.
7. Calls upon churches, presbyteries, and synods to closely work with youth who are living with a sense of hopelessness due to lack of legal status.
8. Directs the Stated Clerk to communicate these declarations in writing to the Congress and the president of the United States.
9. Encourages Presbyterians to advocate for the fair and humane treatment of all persons by law enforcement officials in their local and state governments.

*(Item 09-21. This action derived from a Commissioners' Resolution; approved as amended.)*

***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 ... sustainable communities marked by affordable housing, access to good jobs, and public safety.***

## **FROM HOMELESSNESS TO HOPE**

### **CREATING JUST, SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FOR ALL GOD'S PEOPLE**

#### Executive Summary

##### I. Introduction

American households are under increased pressure to maintain housing. When eviction or several moves force a choice between being housed and being able to meet other expenses, individuals and families seek alternatives such as moving into a cheap motel or living out of their car. Then, not knowing where else to turn, they appear at the doors of churches seeking a handout, a meal, or a place to stay. Piecemeal responses to such appeals, while compassionate, do not address underlying problems and issues. A far better response is to help persons find a path toward a comprehensive plan to end their homelessness. Without such a plan, individuals and families remain in poverty and cycle in and out of homelessness. This report suggests that the cycle of homelessness will be broken when each person or family experiencing homelessness is treated with dignity and respect and is offered

hospitality and welcome to permanent housing, and when everyone has access to resources and services to meet their individualized needs.

Though this report focuses on tested treatment and prevention strategies, it lifts up the approximately 50% of Presbyterian congregations that contribute in various ways to the relief of homeless persons, through food pantries, providing volunteers and beds, and in almost 25% of churches, Habitat for Humanity construction teams. Originating in the work of the Presbyterian Network to End Homelessness, this resolution and report were requested to complement our churchwide response to this visible edge of poverty.

These affirmations emerge from several principles that underlie faithful ministry with persons who are homeless:

- Universal access to safe, decent, accessible, affordable, and permanent housing is a measure of a truly just society and a sign of the coming Reign of God.
- The church is called to create communities of hospitality that assure all members of society a right to basic economic and social well-being, including safe, affordable housing.
- The church is called to honor God's gift of the earth and to create, through personal lifestyle choices and the structures of society, sustainable communities where people can be securely housed in just relationship with one another and the earth.
- The church is called to challenge society to provide safe, decent, accessible, affordable, and permanent housing for all persons who cannot secure such housing through their own means.

Homelessness and the struggle to find permanent, affordable rental housing is a crisis that can be found in a diverse range of communities. People of faith are a common thread running throughout these diverse communities as well, and the church can be a catalyst for building a comprehensive response.

## II. The Problem

There are several levels of homelessness, from “precariously-housed” (persons who are dependent on others for shelter) to “chronically homeless” (persons who experience long-term homelessness or reoccurring episodes of homelessness). Some individuals or families — as a result of an interruption of income, fire, or a medical crisis — have a short-term need for housing assistance. More often, however, the crisis of homelessness is the predictable result of a complex interaction of losses and conditions. Individuals and families needing assistance with housing nearly always need a complex array of other services in order to achieve enough stability to maintain permanent housing.

Housing is considered affordable when the cost of housing plus basic utilities apart from telephone, does not exceed 30 percent of the household's income. More than 37 million households pay so much for housing that they cannot afford other necessities such as food and medical care. Increasing rents in 2005 and 2006 predict escalating housing cost burdens or homelessness for households with low income in years to come.

The primary legislation to address homelessness is the McKinney-Vento Act, first passed in 1987. While the availability of public funds to address homelessness is variable and severely limited, these funds are an essential component as communities work to garner all available resources to meet the needs in their area. An ideal policy would have three foci: prevention, housing assistance, and supportive services.

### III. Theological-Ethical Framework

The people of Israel, with their experience of being strangers and sojourners before coming into the land, understood covenant with God to include care for vulnerable strangers in their midst. Worship and outreach to those in need could not be separated (Isa. 58:6-7).

Much of Jesus' ministry as recorded in the Gospels is marked by acts of hospitality; his choices about where and with whom to share his meals break down the prevailing walls of division and exclusion. His ministry and that of his followers are dependent on the hospitality of others. Moreover, he characterizes the coming Reign of God in terms of a banquet where all are welcomed and find a seat. Paul, in his nurturing of young congregations, emphasized welcoming one another as Christ had welcomed all.

God wants a chair for everyone at the banquet table. The table, a gift of God, is meant to be shared in sustainable hospitality for all. Too often, however, remedial solutions provide only a momentary respite from social stratification and its stigma. In contrast, true hospitality is equated with justice.

The call to true biblical hospitality compels us to go beyond compassion and charity. Our response must empower people to move from homelessness to hope. Our response must include elements of justice, community, and the sustainable sharing and use of God's gift of creation.

Theologically, we serve God when we respond with compassion to our brothers and sisters, when we feed, welcome, clothe, and care for persons in need (Matt. 25:31-46). Seeing the face of Jesus in the face of "the least of these," churches often begin with a direct response. While necessary, these responses do not address the causes of homelessness and do little to break the cycle for individuals and families in need. Churches can also respond on a deeper level by getting involved in partnerships to create affordable housing. However, to truly be about the work of constructing just, sustainable communities, the church needs to be involved in advocacy for public policies that prevent people from becoming homeless and remedy the injustices inherent in the vicious cycle of poverty.

Hospitality demands the most basic element of relationship: the ability to view each person as created in the image of God (*imago dei*). Hospitality means moving beyond having a commitment to welcome (in the abstract) to proactively thinking about how our churches can become communities of hospitality, which means going beyond the abstract to concrete action, especially when communities strive to exclude rather than embrace. Finally, sustainable hospitality requires that we all live more simply so that the earth can continue to sustain itself and the growing human population.

## IV. Constructing Just, Sustainable Communities

Presbyterians and other persons of faith have responded valiantly to the crisis of homelessness over recent decades. But the problem persists. How can the cycle end?

### A. Strategies for Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness

A replicable, community-based strategy for breaking the cycle of homelessness has several components. These components include: 1) prevention, which helps people keep their housing; 2) individualized, comprehensive programs of housing and services for those who become homeless; and 3) affordable, permanent housing with a variety of support services so that residents are able to maintain their housing.

An effective response can take many forms and be developed in a community of any size. Churches and religious communities can and should play a significant role, providing resources (financial support, volunteers, in-kind donations, and advocacy) to make the model successful. The goal is to support families or individuals who are able to become totally self-sufficient, and to provide others with the services they need to maintain permanent housing. The key to success is a plan for a spectrum of programs developed to meet varied needs.

### B. Faithful Response to Homelessness Through Advocacy

As Presbyterians, we are led from worship into the world where we act out our calling as disciples of Jesus Christ. While individual acts of mercy and compassion are well understood as “Christ-like,” and providing financial support to groups and ministries engaged in the relief of misery and injustice is common, many Christians are reluctant to become directly involved themselves. Fewer still accept the call of the gospel to engage the “structures and systems which create or foster brokenness and distortion” (*Book of Order* W-7.3003). Yet as Reformed Christians, our heritage is filled with examples of such faithful engagement, and the church has again and again affirmed the efficacy of such action. This commitment stems from a strong belief in the sovereignty of God over all aspects of life.

Part of the role of the church in relation to social witness and engagement is to call other parts of society to account and to solicit their collaboration in addressing injustice. While the church’s resources are considerable, they pale in the face of other sources, both public and private, that can be brought to bear on the needs of the world. While some would claim that tending to people who are poor and homeless is the rightful work of the church – and not the government – the religious community cannot do it all. A vital role of the church and its resources is to call government to account and to leverage governmental funds to address the agendas in which the church and the society agree action is needed. This is called advocacy.

#### 1. Municipal and State Level Advocacy

As with direct engagement, advocacy often begins with what is obvious and at hand, and then grows in complexity. From small beginnings advocacy can expand as issues and opportunities present themselves through organizations that support mixed-income

communities and inclusionary zoning policies and coalitions that address poverty and aim to create just and sustainable communities. Such efforts include:

- Living Wage campaigns, which support workers in the struggle for a living wage
- Inclusionary zoning policies
- Strategies to counteract neighborhood exclusivism (eg NIMBYism, Not in My Back Yard syndrome).

## 2. National Level Advocacy

There are several policy directions which the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) at all levels is called to support at this time.

- a. Investment in Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), a national organization that accepts investments for use in a revolving predevelopment loan fund. Funds invested in LISC pay a determined rate of interest and are secure, risk-free investments.
- b. The creation of a National Affordable Housing Trust Fund to construct, rehabilitate, and preserve 1,500,000 units of housing over the next ten years.
- c. Budget priorities and adequate revenue to assure the availability of housing assistance and comprehensive supportive services for persons who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- d. “Smart growth” development and “green” construction incentives and tax credits to enhance the growth of just and sustainable communities without leading to gentrification. (Particularly as energy costs are expected to propel more people back into cities, the need for affordable housing should grow.)
- e. Taxation strategies that move away from tax breaks for upper income homeowners and toward increased benefits for persons with low- to moderate income.
- f. Retention and expansion of the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program
- g. Preservation of existing affordable housing
- h. Increased emphasis on Supportive Housing, permanent, affordable housing linked to services.
- i. Continued investment in and expansion of the McKinney-Vento Act or other comprehensive national legislative strategies for ending homelessness at its root causes.
- j. Making the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) a full partner in the effort to end chronic homelessness and meet the services needs of all persons experiencing homelessness

- k. Expansion of Veterans Administration programs for veterans who are homeless to include funding for permanent housing and the creation of innovative new models for service that link permanent housing with supportive services.
- l. Expanded funding for community reentry programs to help communities prevent and end homelessness for people with special needs who are reentering communities from jails and prisons and for supportive housing targeted to people who are homeless with mental illness.
- m. Restoration of flexible federal funding to states, cities, and counties to enable them to define their own priorities and enhance funding for affordable housing and supportive services as part of their comprehensive plans to prevent and end homelessness
- n. Response to the subprime mortgage lending crisis that is designed to correct the abuses in this market, prevent future foreclosures, and create a safety net for families who have fallen victim to predatory or unwise lending.

The Study Team that produced this Report consisted of eight well-informed leaders in homelessness ministry, affordable housing development (in New York City and San Francisco), successful program development (Shreveport and Chicago), and varied outreach (Tucson, Baltimore, rural North Carolina, Minneapolis). One member is a professor of housing studies; four have theological training; one teaches social ethics. The consultant writer is a former urban pastor and editor.

#### Recommendations:

The 218th General Assembly (2008) approves the recommendations below and receives the study paper, *From Homelessness to Hope: Creating Just, Sustainable Communities for All God's People* (the executive summary of which is printed above), which provides rationale and resources for social policy, social service, and education.

The purpose of these recommendations is to provide information and guidance for governing bodies and direction for denominational advocates. These recommendations affirm the complexity of issues surrounding homelessness and the need for a holistic approach that (1) addresses ministry to those experiencing or at risk of homelessness and (2) the structural components necessary for a comprehensive solution.

The historical witness of the PC(USA) affirms the following principles, as foundational to faithful ministry with persons who are homeless:

- Universal access to safe, decent, accessible, affordable, and permanent housing is a measure of a just society and a sign of the coming Reign of God.
- The church is called to create communities of hospitality that assure all members of society, including persons experiencing homelessness, a right to basic economic and social well-being, including safe, affordable housing.

- The church is called to honor God’s gift of the earth and to create, through personal lifestyle choices and the structures of society, sustainable communities where people can be securely housed in just relationship with one another and the earth.

- The church is called to challenge society to provide safe, decent, accessible, affordable, and permanent housing for all persons who cannot secure such housing through their own means.

1. Commend the ongoing witness, commitment, ministry and advocacy of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), its General Assembly and agencies, the Presbyterian Washington Office, the Presbyterian Network to End Homelessness, and the more than 3,500 Presbyterian congregations reporting hands-on engagement in housing and homeless ministries. We commend previous Presbyterian commitments to actions aimed at preventing poverty, e.g. education, job development, day care, living wage, health care, [opposition to] gambling [and] strengthening individuals and families and individuals in their efforts to avoid homelessness.

2. Encourage congregations, presbyteries, synods, and other church-related entities to pursue comprehensive responses to the crisis of homelessness and affordable housing. The General Assembly Council ministries of Compassion, Peace and Justice will develop and provide resources (including this report) to help these entities in this task, covering such actions as:

- Shelters, transitional housing programs, mixed-income communities, and affordable housing in their communities;

- Links with service providers in the community;

- The impact of employment practices, including sustainable wages and benefits, employment of youth and adults reentering the workforce after being homeless or institutionalized;

- Links with local, regional, and national coalitions that advocate for worker justice and sustainable wages, green design in homes and communities, permanent affordable rental housing;

- Supporting residents of public housing in their efforts to organize and have voice in their communities;

- The application of stewardship strategies in the area of homelessness, such as allocating physical space for services for persons in need of housing assistance, tithing capital campaign proceeds;

- General Assembly resources available to congregations, such as the Presbyterian Investment & Loan Program, Inc. (PILP).

3. Affirm that the church is called to offer its diverse resources in response to the crisis of homelessness and affordable rental housing, but also insist that faith communities cannot

and should not be expected to address this crisis in isolation from governmental and private sector partnerships. Therefore, we advocate initiatives such as:

a. *Policy Affecting Housing and Housing Services*

(1) Preservation and development of housing programs at all governing levels that target households with low incomes and persons with special needs, especially the federal Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program.

(2) Restoration and expansion of “Project-Based Section 8” and other federal subsidy and incentive programs that promote the construction of affordable housing, and revitalization of the 2.5 million units of affordable housing funded under this program.

(3) Development of Housing Trust Funds at municipal, state, and national levels, to make significant funding available to both urban and rural communities for the development of permanent, “green,” affordable housing.

(4) Enactment of inclusionary zoning policies and support for other strategies to achieve mixed-income communities, with attention to replacing housing units for persons with extremely low income when displaced through community development initiatives.

(5) Improved enforcement of existing nondiscrimination laws with regard to housing and home financing.

b. *Policy Affecting Services for Persons Experiencing Homelessness or at Risk of Homelessness*

(1) Revision of municipal zoning codes to include the temporary housing of persons (e.g. shelters, transitional housing, or supportive housing) as a permitted use, to facilitate the development of affordable rental housing, and to prohibit discrimination against persons based on their housing status.

(2) Increased funding for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and other departments to progress toward the goal of ending chronic homelessness, such as:

(a) Expansion and adequate funding for Supportive Housing (housing plus services) for all people who have little or no income, are disabled, are formerly homeless, or are living with mental illness, to aid them in living independent, healthy, and fulfilling lives, and to prevent persons from recycling among the streets, the shelters, the jails, and the prisons.

(b) Continuation of and increased investment in the McKinney-Vento Act and related legislation, which provide funding for many services for persons who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including amendments that would increase flexibility in program administration and make programs more performance-based.

(c) Expansion of Veterans Administration (VA) programs for veterans who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless to include funding for permanent housing and the creation of innovative new models for service, including programs to help reintegrate returning veterans

into the community, encourage partnerships between the VA and community-based organizations, and link permanent housing for veterans and their families with supportive services.

(d) Renewal and expansion of federal funding to help communities prevent homelessness among youth and young adults, as well as persons with special needs as they reenter communities from jails and prisons, and to provide housing and supportive services.

(e) Restoration of funding for mainstream programs that have been utilized by states, cities, and counties to provide housing and services as part of their comprehensive plans to prevent and end homelessness. These include but are not limited to HUD's Community Development Block Grant Program, the Home Investment Partnership Program (HOME), Supportive Housing for the Elderly Program (Section 202), and Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities (Section 811) as well as Medicaid, and other grants to states and localities.

*c. Policies Affecting Lending Practices*

(1) Development of foreclosure prevention strategies and programs to benefit households at risk.

(2) Restrict predatory and abusive lending practices, in consultation with the 217th General Assembly's recommendations regarding *A Reformed Understanding of Usury in the 21st Century* (*Minutes*, 2006, Part I, p. 805).

*d. Policies Affecting Taxation*

(1) Support of fiscally responsible federal budget priorities and adequate revenues to ensure long-term funding for critical housing assistance and other safety net programs for families with low income.

(2) Advocacy for budget priorities at all levels of government that utilize incentives and tax credits to encourage "smart growth" and the development of sustainable communities.

(3) Increase tax benefits for those living at lower income levels, so as to achieve a more equitable distribution of tax benefits for the purpose of achieving greater economic stability for individuals and families at risk of homelessness such as:

- expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit to include workers not raising children
- expansion of the refundable Child Tax Credit by making it available to more low-income workers, and
- development at the state or federal level of a refundable tax credit targeted to low-income renters, similar to the subsidy provided to homeowners through the federal mortgage interest deduction.

4. That the General Assembly urge the Presbyterian Foundation, in collaboration with the General Assembly Council, the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy, and the office on Mission Responsibility Through Investment, to expand its Creative Investment Program to invest meaningfully in the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) to create a revolving loan fund available to Presbyterian congregations, presbyteries, synods, and coalitions in which church entities are involved, for predevelopment loans to support the construction and rehabilitation of permanent rental housing for individuals and families with low income and/or a history of homelessness.

5. Direct the communication and distribution of this resolution:

a. Direct the Office of the General Assembly, in collaboration with the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy, to publish this report in its entirety online and in hard copy, making copies available to each presbytery, resource center, synod, and requesting session, as well as colleges and seminaries related to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and for distribution throughout the church through Presbyterian Distribution Services; and to notify the church of its availability through the PC(USA) website.

b. Direct the General Assembly Council to facilitate the development of a portion of its website to make information, resources, and advocacy suggestions related to this resolution easily accessible to the church at all levels.

c. Urge the office of Small Church and Community Ministries, in collaboration with the Presbyterian Washington Office and other church entities, to develop and/or make available resources to educate individual Presbyterians and congregations on the nature and extent of the crisis in homelessness and affordable housing, the types of housing that can address the needs of those caught in the cycle of homelessness, and ways to respond to and advocate for public policy directives.

6. Request that all PC(USA) members forgo one meal per week (if one is able) as an act of worship and humility. The value of that meal is to be pledged (in a manner of the donor's choice) to feeding those in need.

*(Item 09-07. This action derived from a resolution developed by the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy; approved as amended.)*

## **STRUCK DOWN, BUT NOT DESTROYED**

### **FROM HURRICANE KATRINA TO A MORE EQUITABLE FUTURE**

#### *Introduction*

The 217th General Assembly (2006) received initial reports on the effects of Hurricane Katrina on New Orleans and the Gulf Coast from several sources: the Advocacy Committee

for Racial Ethnic Concerns (ACREC), impacted presbyteries, and Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA). Presbyteries affected by the hurricane immediately began to search for pastors displaced by the disaster, coordinated communications with churches, and assessed the impact on congregations, church members, and pastors as they developed a response and coordinated recovery efforts with PDA. Presbyterian Disaster Assistance had swung into action immediately, beginning the double process of emergency support and assessment of long-term needs. Thanks to tent communities and other logistical arrangements by PDA and the hospitality and coordination provided by presbyteries and local congregations, an astonishing number of more than 35,000 volunteers have now pitched in to help reverse the effects of a combined natural, governmental, and cultural disaster, providing more than 178,000 volunteer days of service, worth an estimated \$21 million in labor plus an additional \$95,000 in donated materials, while Presbyterians overall have contributed \$27 million in funds.

This report begins by saluting the Christian commitment of the volunteers. We believe the whole church should be proud, and we find Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, the Gulf Coast hosting and giving congregations, and the presbyteries of the Gulf Coast region worthy of honor. Quoting Isaiah 58:12, in 2007 the Presbyterian Health, Education and Welfare Association (PHEWA) called on the whole church to be “repairer[s] of the breach, [and] restorer[s] of [the] streets to live in.” The effects of this disaster on the church itself have also been of great concern, as congregations and presbyteries have been weakened. This is a time when most Presbyterians put aside theological differences to respond to God’s call to care for one another, acknowledging that: “[when] one member suffers, all suffer together” (1 Cor. 12:26). But we do not care only for ourselves, and we recognize that all the churches together cannot repair a Katrina-sized breach in our social fabric.

Thus this report complements that outpouring of hands-on and financial concern to look at what the tragedy revealed about New Orleans and its neighboring communities, and about our government’s response. This is not an exhaustive catalog of devastation, ward-by-ward or parish-by-parish; nor does it inventory all of the weaknesses in systems of criminal justice, transportation, environmental protection, levee engineering, or urban planning. Public housing and public health remain at the core of Gulf-area needs, and the New Orleans school system is now a large and uneven experiment in non-union charter schools. Economic development remains stunted except for the tourist industry. Yet while the church must be aware of these realities, its focus must be on the suffering and vulnerability of families and communities and the responsibility of federal, state, and local government to respond.

Beyond the church’s own caregiving, it is the church’s divinely ordained mission to stand with the afflicted, and not to minimize the patterns that have made for soul-drowning poverty in parts of every city and rural county. The attached study looks at the “framing” coverage of the disaster, responses by the church and others to the immediate tragedy, but then looks at structural issues of race, gender, and class and the resources of our tradition to face these dynamics.

The primary author of the study was raised in New Orleans and, with their permission, shares some of the suffering of his own family, most of whom have struggled to stay, and

stayed to struggle, in that city. As a professor of urban ministry, he also takes us to the hard truths beneath the deluge of data: although the emergence of a black presidential contender gives hope to our aspirations for a race-neutral society, much of our culture and civic ethos remain stunted by structural racism. Any plans for rescue must recognize these mutually reinforcing legacies of segregation in employment, housing, and education. This is part of the church's work of strengthening its witness of charity with a concomitant witness of justice advocacy, and it prompts the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) and the Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns (ACREC) to propose a focused continuing study of our urban areas and the capacities of the church within them.

### *Long-Range Concerns of the Church*

We have seen a great process of triage, planned and unplanned, reflecting lines of race and class, which has resulted in the virtual halving of pre-Katrina populations, with the bulk of the population loss among the poor. We have seen scores of deaths and continued hard living in Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) trailers and moldy homes. Even for those remaining and still returning to New Orleans and its surrounding parishes, there is a great difference between families getting back on their feet and the wholeness of community. It is for the church to lift up a right of place that goes beyond land value, and the cultural and spiritual losses that require more than physical reconstruction.

Of existing policies that speak most directly to this reality, "Building Community Among Strangers," written following racial and other tensions of the Los Angeles riots in the early 1990s, expresses the need for systemic change. The church's commitments to sustainable development and against "environmental racism" or locating toxic hazards primarily in or near poor communities, often communities of color, also speak to the Gulf Coast situation. In addition to social witness policies, of course, the PC(USA) has strategies of mission and evangelism that look to building up the witness of congregations in areas of disaster and disruption.

The recommendations of this report also look to the vulnerability of countless other coastal communities threatened by accelerated climate change and other geographic challenges. The ACREC and ACSWP chose to title this report with the Bible's promise of redemption despite tragedy taken from 2 Corinthians 4:8-9. Too many people in coastal Louisiana and Mississippi have indeed been "afflicted ... but not crushed," "struck down, but not destroyed" and, we pray, not driven to despair. The message of the hope in all disasters must be that God the Creator does not abandon people and neither should we.

This resistance to abandonment is the other side of the church's theological concern for the common good. It does mean special assistance for those in special need, but it does not mean subsidizing ecologically or logistically unsustainable residence patterns. Insurance practices are discussed in the study paper, but wise federal regulation both holds companies to fulfill their agreements and puts scientifically justified limits on shoreline development. Similarly, there need to be limits on development in dry areas with regard to fire and everyday water depletion. In this way, reflection on the Katrina catastrophe's remediation turns one to issues of prevention, planning for disaster and emergency response, and careful study of the sociology of recovery.

The global prospect of increased internal displacement, in relation to both ecological change and warfare, prompted the United Nations Human Rights community in 1998 to put forward *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*. The same group that helped develop the Guiding Principles [document], the Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement, has supported a study applying those principles to the post-Katrina situation (note: *Hurricane Katrina and the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* by Chris Kromm and Sue Sturgis, Institute for Southern Studies, January 2008). This and other comprehensive reports review the adequacy and implementation of the 1988 Stafford Act, the basic five-level framework for federal disaster assistance (full name: The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act). It is thus not the church's role to duplicate this kind of study, but for appropriate agencies and representatives to examine and support key recommendations, particularly for the good of potentially affected areas and planning for the church itself.

As the ... study indicates, an extensive bibliography of reports has been distilled in the recommendations below. Both the Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns and the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy have listened to a range of persons involved, and the latter body has also visited New Orleans.

#### Recommendations:

In response to the catastrophic disaster to Gulf Coast areas precipitated by Hurricane Katrina, the 218th General Assembly (2008):

1. Receives the study paper entitled, *Struck Down, But Not Destroyed: From Hurricane Katrina to A More Equitable Future*, and directs that it and the resolution approved be made available on the web and in a limited printing for all presbyteries, synods, and educational institutions related to the church, as well as a copy given to each volunteer group staying at a PDA volunteer village.
2. Declares that in light of the Reformed tradition's understanding of the role of government as the arm of a whole people acting to maintain the common good, the official responses of society's agencies, public and private, to the disaster of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita have been grievously inadequate regarding the needs of those affected by trauma, loss, and relocation in the Gulf Coast region and, in particular, to the African-American citizens of New Orleans, the physically challenged, and the poor of that city.
3. Calls the nation to repentance regarding our society's continuing failed responses by taking concrete, timely steps, through policy formation and the appropriate marshalling of financial and human resources, to transform New Orleans and the Gulf Coast region into a model of redevelopment with social and environmental justice.
4. Commends those members and bodies within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) that have modeled constructive and compassionate response:

- a. The 35,000 plus volunteers who gave more than 178,000 days of service estimated to value more than \$21 million in volunteer labor; and all those who contributed funds to face this unprecedented disaster;
  - b. Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) for its outstanding role in assisting the whole church in responding to Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma.
  - c. The congregations and presbyteries on the Gulf Coast that have welcomed and hosted volunteers and coordinated clean up and rebuilding efforts, and those from around the country and the world who have sent mission teams and resources to the Gulf Coast.
  - d. Presbyterian Health, Education and Welfare Association (PHEWA) for supporting caregivers and engaging Presbyterians from across the country in addressing systemic and specific concerns in New Orleans and elsewhere and in educating Presbyterians on the connection of charity and justice.
  - e. The Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for waiving dues for congregations impacted by the disaster for seven months and for providing more than \$300,000 in emergency assistance grants to church workers in the affected region. The Board of Pensions also streamlined access to care with its medical plan vendors and arranged additional counseling services to address personal impacts of the devastation and stresses of care giving.
  - f. The synods of the impacted areas for administering funds raised by PDA for pastor and church staff salary support. More than \$714,922 was distributed to support pastors and staff of congregations.
  - g. The Interagency Task Force, which brought together representatives from various agencies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to coordinate ongoing, long-term responses to the needs of congregations, including assessment and funding of congregations needing assistance with rebuilding their damaged facilities. More than \$2,218,569 has been distributed for the rebuilding of damaged church facilities.
5. Expresses concern regarding the health, environmental, and safety issues related to the disposal of Hurricane Katrina debris by directing the Stated Clerk to:
- a. Communicate to the City Council and mayor of New Orleans the PC(USA)'s affirmation of the closure of the Chef Menteur landfill in 2007, and to communicate our continuing concern regarding the health and environmental issues involved in the use of the Old Gentilly landfill.
  - b. Urge the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality to work with New Orleans city officials to develop a comprehensive debris management strategy that addresses environmental, safety, and health issues at landfills used for the disposal of Hurricane Katrina waste.

- c. Request congressional hearings on debris management post-Katrina that examines the lessons learned from this disaster and provides recommendations for state and federal actions that guide debris management, especially in regards to hazardous waste, in future disasters.
  
6. Urges the Presbyterian Foundation, through its Creative Investment Program and in collaboration with the General Assembly Council through Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI) and in consultation with other offices, to make a loan of \$4 million to Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) in order to create a low-interest revolving loan fund that would be available to Presbyterian congregations, presbyteries, and coalitions in which church entities are involved, in the affected Gulf region for development loans to support the construction and rehabilitation of affordable, permanent rental housing and mixed housing attached to congregational redevelopment, or to fund neighborhood initiatives organized by community development corporations in which a Presbyterian congregation or presbytery is involved. Following the precedent of \$4 million made available for development in Los Angeles in 1991, and limited to a five-year period, this investment would accrue at an interest rate to be agreed upon between the Foundation and LISC and would result in a secure investment for the PC(USA).
  
7. Encourages PDA and those agencies involved in disaster recovery research to work in collaboration with long-term recovery organizations in finding economically viable “green” building processes, recommended materials (appropriate to context), and models to assist in sustainable rebuilding.
  
8. Directs Small Church and Community Ministry, Racial Ethnic Ministries, and other appropriate ministries of the General Assembly Council, in consultation with Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, to produce a resource for pro-active ministry and preparation for disaster in urban and rural areas of concentrated poverty, and provide these to coastal and other vulnerable presbyteries. (This work may be done ecumenically and build on existing resources).
  
9. Directs the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) to review the provisions of “Building Community Among Strangers” and other policies involving urban congregations and populations in light of the patterns of enduring poverty in most major U.S. cities, and to study with urban presbyteries ways that public policies may assist the redevelopment of communities and congregations.
  
10. Directs the Office of the General Assembly, the Presbyterian Washington Office, and other ministries of the General Assembly Council (GAC), as appropriate, to support the following public policy directions at the federal level, and urge individual Presbyterians, congregations, presbyteries and synods, as able, to support these and other equitable reconstruction policies on all levels of government, especially state and local:
  - a. Re-professionalization of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) through careful investigation of its failures of communication, logistics, and coordination with local bodies and institution of new policies as necessary to ensure better emergency preparedness, communications with evacuees, cross-cultural awareness training, involvement of affected

people and institutions in recovery efforts, and outreach to persons of color and women as employees and contractors.

- b. Long-range planning on population displacement and study of the impacts and effectiveness of FEMA recovery efforts and state/local disaster management.
- c. Federal maintenance of prevailing wage levels (under the Davis-Bacon Act), affirmative action requirements, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards, and other worker and union protections in reconstruction efforts.
- d. System-wide review of the fairness of charter school-based education in New Orleans, including its impacts on teachers as well as children, especially those living in trailers on a long-term basis.
- e. Full compliance with environmental laws governing hazardous wastes, fairness in locating waste sites and other hazards in the full range of communities.
- f. Public housing reconstruction on at least a “one-for-one” basis to ensure replacement of housing destroyed and policies to strengthen provision of affordable housing to those whose incomes range up to 200 percent of the federal poverty threshold.
- g. Preserv[ation of] affordable housing by instituting rent freezes immediately following disaster and providing for investigation of price gouging in the rental and housing markets in a federally declared disaster area.
- h. Congress[ional] investigat[ion of]: (1) whether persons displaced by the hurricanes on the Gulf Coast were allowed to live in FEMA trailers with dangerously high levels of formaldehyde as has been reported in February 2008 by the Center for Disease Control (CDC); (2) why it took FEMA more than two years to investigate health complaints from persons living in these trailers; (3) the health impact this delay has created in persons living in FEMA trailers; and (4) how FEMA plans to relocate the 36,000 people still living in FEMA trailers whose health continues to be put at risk.
- i. Accountable state and federal planning by the Army Corps of Engineers and other bodies to maximize public safety and minimize public exposure to natural risks in the strengthening of levees and other infrastructure improvements.
- j. Environmentally-sound planning, in light of climate change, to allow bayou and delta buffer area regeneration and the appropriate protection and regulation of fishing and other coastal economic redevelopment.
- k. Effective insurance regulation to ensure clarity in coverage and fairness to policyholders.
- l. Rebuilding of full hospital capacity in affected areas, and development of psychiatric resources for communities affected by large-scale depression and post-traumatic stress, with particular attention to services for the indigent and uninsured. Such resources should include youth protective and domestic violence preventive outpatient services.

11. [In order to] encourage and equip leaders in local congregations in the Gulf Coast area to help in identifying critical needs that may be addressed through local public policy, and to engage proactively in the development and implementation of such public policy[, directs] the Office of the General Assembly, the Presbyterian Washington Office, and other ministries of the General Assembly Council (GAC), as appropriate, to identify and make available resources to equip and empower local leaders for this task.

*(Item 09-15. This item derived from a resolution developed by the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy and the Advisory Committee on Racial-Ethnic Concerns.)*

**Resolution on Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Partnerships  
with Presbyteries Affected by the Storms of 2005**

The 218th General Assembly (2008) approves the following resolution:

Whereas Presbyterians throughout the General Assembly have been generous and gracious in responding to the 2005 Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma with gifts of time, resources, and prayers; and

Whereas Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) has been and continues to be abundantly helpful in providing leadership and resources in the affected areas and in coordinating relief efforts throughout the denomination; and

Whereas PDA and the presbyteries and synods involved in recovery efforts recognize that the work of rebuilding is far from complete and have worked together to develop a long-term financial response plan, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the 218th General Assembly (2008)

1. Thanks Presbyterians throughout the denomination for their generous giving, prayers, and volunteer services in recovery efforts working not only with PDA but also in partnership with local congregations;
2. Thanks and commends the staff and volunteers of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, who, working under extremely difficult circumstances, created a framework for a continued and faithful response to the storms of 2005.
3. Instructs Presbyterian Disaster Assistance to continue the work of nurturing partnerships with the presbyteries affected by the storms of 2005, including regular consultations concerning volunteers and resources.
4. Affirms and commends the long-term recovery plan for the Gulf Coast, which was developed jointly by PDA and the synods and presbyteries impacted by hurricanes Rita, Katrina, and Wilma. This plan, approved by the GAC, funds recovery efforts on the Gulf Coast through 2011 and allows for continuing evaluation and adjustments as circumstances change.

*(Item 09-04. This action derived from overtures from the Presbytery of South Louisiana and the Synod of the Sun; approved as amended.)*

## ON ADDRESSING THE TRAGEDY OF AMERICA'S GUN VIOLENCE

The 218th General Assembly (2008) adopts the following recommendations:

1. *Pastoral Recommendations for the Entire Church*
  - a. Pray for God's comfort, courage, and peace for the eighty families who lose loved ones every day to guns in America and for the 1,000 families who daily experience death by guns in the developing world.
  - b. Commend those persons, congregations, organizations, and agencies who work to stop gun violence and dedicate their time, financial resources, talents, energies, and prayers to find viable solutions to this domestic and international plague and to applaud them for their courage in unmasking the idolatries of our time.
  - c. Encourage pastors and sessions of local churches and their communities to organize interfaith groups that will visit sites where there have been shootings and/or killings and lead brief worship services to demonstrate the concerns and hopes of the faith community in pursuing peace in our neighborhoods.
  - d. Study and act on the previously approved policies of the PC(USA) and its predecessor denominations concerning gun violence and small arms trafficking.
  - e. Monitor diligently the political processes in cities, states, and the nation for opportunities to work for the passage of laws that control gun access and to seize these opportunities to support legislation that will make our streets, schools, and places of worship free from gun violence.
  - f. Work with legislators to take the following actions that will increase the safety and well-being of our nation and communities:
    - (1) To ensure that all persons buying guns at gun shows undergo a background check, close the gun show loophole in the thirty-five states where it remains open. (The U.S. Department of Justice Statistics, "Background Checks for Firearm Transfers," 2005, reveals [that] since the Brady law was enacted in 1994, 1.4 million gun purchases were denied by background checks from licensed dealers for convicted felons, those who have serious mental illness, terrorists, minors, domestic abusers and other prohibited parties.)
    - (2) Ban the sale and possession of large ammunition magazines and assault weapons that have no redeemable social purpose, and cannot legitimately be termed "sporting guns."
    - (3) Support the introduction of new technologies, such as micro-stamping in which identifying information from a gun is transferred onto bullet cartridges, which allow law enforcement to more easily trace guns and solve crimes.
    - (4) Affirm and support the work of the PC(USA) through the Presbyterian United Nations Office and other appropriate offices to stop illegal arms sales by the United States and others.

2. *Programmatic Recommendations for National Church Agencies*

- a. Direct the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy, in consultation with the Office of Theology and Worship, the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, the Presbyterian United Nations Office, and the Presbyterian Washington Office, to prepare for the larger church a comprehensive study on the concerns raised in this overture. The study should articulate a Reformed Theology of proactive, constructive nonviolence [as a ] way of life and [a] tactical method for bringing God's justice and peace to our communities and around the world; assess the social and economic costs of gun violence; explore how gun violence fits into a larger national culture of violence, and identify ways that the church can effectively address gun violence issues domestically and internationally, and to report these findings along with proposed action items to the 219th General Assembly (2010).
- b. Direct the national offices to provide annually to our pastors, educators, and members educational and worship resources to encourage and equip the whole church to engage fully in the struggle to reduce gun violence. (This is similar to Recommendation 3. of *Overture 00-95*, "On Gun Violence" from the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta, *Minutes*, 2000, Part I, p. 482.)
- c. Direct the Washington Office and the Peacemaking [Program] to make gun violence one of its highest priorities; and to direct the Peacemaking [Program] to make an annual progress report to subsequent General Assemblies until this issue is resolved. (This is similar to a recommendation from the 1989 "Resolution on Assault Weapons," *Minutes*, 1989, Part I, p. 430, paragraph 35.118.)
- d. Direct the Stated Clerk to distribute this resolution to all members of Congress, to the present and future president of the United States, to appropriate members of the Cabinet, and to members of state legislatures.
- e. Direct the Stated Clerk to specifically call on the U. S. government to enter into negotiations with its international partners in the United Nations to adopt a legally-binding trade treaty to counter the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, particularly to developing nations.
- f. Direct the Stated Clerk to communicate and commend these actions to other ecumenical faith communities, and to invite their active participation in the struggle to reduce gun violence, both domestically and internationally.

*(Item 09-05. This action derived from an overture from National Capital Presbytery; approved as amended.)*

***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 ... 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.***

## THE POWER TO CHANGE

### U.S. ENERGY POLICY AND GLOBAL WARMING

#### Executive Summary

To imagine the fullness of God is to talk about energy. From beginning to end, the Bible is replete with images of energy and divine activity. In the first verses of Genesis “a wind from God swept over the face of the waters” inaugurating God’s creation of the world (Gen. 1:2).<sup>1</sup> In the last chapter of Revelation “the river of the water of life” flows from the throne of God to water the trees of life which grow along its banks, and whose twelve kinds of fruit are for the healing of the nations (Rev. 22). Energy is central to God’s work as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier.

God provides energy in abundance for all whom God has made (Ps. 145:15). There can be no greater measure of God’s abundant provision than the energy provided by Earth’s sun. Each hour of every day the sun delivers more energy to Earth than human beings consume in an entire year. Renewable energy sources can provide almost six times more power than human communities currently consume from all energy sources.<sup>2</sup> Unlike virtually all other species, however, human beings in the modern era have not learned how to live in harmony with current solar energy. Instead, human communities have grown and some have prospered over the past three centuries by tapping into banked solar energy that has been buried for millions of years beneath Earth’s crust.

Today, heavy reliance on these fossil fuels (coal, oil, and natural gas) has produced grave threats to justice, peace, and the integrity of creation. The American Lung Association estimates over 150 million people in the United States live in areas where poor air quality due to the combustion of fossil fuels puts their health at risk.<sup>3</sup> Those who bear the brunt of this pollution are asthmatics, the elderly, the very young, and those who live nearest polluting industrial facilities or busy highways, generally the poor and often racial minorities. Economically, the rising cost of petroleum fuels has impacted all Americans. The average price of gasoline has more than doubled since 2002, rising to over \$3.50 a gallon.<sup>4</sup> Persons in low-income households often must choose between paying their energy bills or buying food and medicine. This is unjust.

Politically, various studies estimate that the U.S. spends between \$55 billion and nearly \$100 billion each year on the military to secure oil supplies around the world.<sup>5</sup> These estimates do not include more than \$100 billion spent each year since 2003 for the war in Iraq.<sup>6</sup> Recently the National Petroleum Council warned that international energy development and trade are more likely to be influenced by geopolitical considerations and less by market factors.<sup>7</sup> President Bush acknowledged this reality in his 2006 State of the Union address when he remarked: “America is addicted to oil, which is often imported from unstable parts of the world.”<sup>8</sup> Our dependence on fossil fuels is a threat to peace.

There are also serious environmental problems associated with our heavy reliance on fossil fuels. Oil spills around the world despoil waters and harm wildlife. Mountain-top coal mining in Appalachia erodes hillsides, ruins scenic lands, and degrades surface streams and groundwater supplies. Nitrous oxide emissions and particulate matter from fossil fuel combustion play havoc with respiratory systems. Volatile organic compounds in petroleum fuels produce cancers and other diseases. Sulfur dioxide emissions from the burning of coal produce acid rain that destroys forests and significantly reduces agricultural production around the world.

While these are all serious problems, they pale in comparison to the perils posed by global warming and climate change. If the world takes a business-as-usual approach and continues a fossil fuel-intensive energy path during the 21st century, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) projects current concentrations of greenhouse gases could more than quadruple by the year 2100. Under this scenario, the IPCC projects the global-average surface temperature will increase 4.0° Celsius (7.2° Fahrenheit) by the end of the 21st century. Put into perspective, the global-average surface temperature only increased 0.6°C (1.1°F) during the 20th century.<sup>9</sup>

This rapid rate of global warming will raise sea levels, endangering millions living in low-lying areas, despoil freshwater resources, widen the range of infectious diseases like malaria, reduce agricultural production, and increase the risk of extinction for 25-30 percent of all surveyed species.<sup>10</sup> A subsequent report released by the U.S. Climate Change Science Program claims “[w]e are very likely to experience a faster rate of climate change in the next 100 years than has been seen over the past 10,000 years.”<sup>11</sup>

Together with people all around the world, Christians at the outset of the 21st century must respond to this climate crisis by developing a new way of living in harmony with Earth’s energy resources and in solidarity with all of God’s creatures. This moral obligation involves our commitment to the poor and marginalized among the present generation, but it especially includes our responsibilities to future generations. Actions taken or not taken today will impact the welfare of the planet for centuries to come.

Those of us living in the United States have a unique moral responsibility to change our energy consumption practices in the face of global climate change. According to the World Resources Institute, our nation is responsible for nearly 30 percent of the carbon dioxide emissions produced by the combustion of fossil fuels from 1850-2002, and we still lead the world, accounting for approximately 23 percent of all greenhouse gas emissions today.<sup>12</sup> There is no question that as a nation, and as individuals, the United States must accept its moral responsibility to deal with the negative consequences associated with fossil fuel consumption and global warming.

Presbyterians in the United States first addressed issues related to energy policy in a comprehensive policy statement adopted in 1981: *The Power to Speak Truth to Power*.<sup>13</sup> This important social policy document elaborated an ethic of ecological justice that attempted to unite in one broad scope of moral concern the ethical obligations Christians have both to present and future generations, as well as to all human and natural communities. Four norms rooted in scripture and Christian theology were central to this ethic: justice, sustainability,

sufficiency, and participation. Twelve guidelines rooted in these norms were also identified to aid in ethical assessment of energy options: equity, efficiency, adequacy, renewability, appropriateness, risk, peace, cost, employment, flexibility, timely decision making, and aesthetics.

The ethic of ecological justice and its related norms were developed further a decade later in 1990 when the PC(USA) approved a major teaching on environmental policy, *Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice*.<sup>14</sup> This study recast the norm of justice in terms of solidarity and honed the application of the other norms to environmental issues.

As new scientific studies further confirmed the phenomenon of global warming, and as the prospects grew for a second war in oil-rich Iraq, [commissioners to] the 214th General Assembly in 2002 approved a proposal to revise the 1981 policy.<sup>15</sup> The following recommendations and accompanying study document, *The Power to Change: U.S. Energy Policy and Global Warming*, were developed in response to that plea. They utilize the ecojustice norms and energy guidelines to engage in a revised ethical assessment of U.S. energy policy within the context of challenges posed by global warming and climate change.

There are three important truths revealed in [this] document. First, the potential supply of renewable and alternative energy sources far exceeds the current and projected demand from all energy sources. God has truly furnished creation with energy in abundance. Nevertheless, the second truth is that our nation still relies heavily on fossil fuels and nuclear power to provide 93 percent of the energy we currently consume. We are not living sustainably in relationship with God's creation. This leads to the third, sad truth: Our reliance on these traditional energy sources poses grave dangers to justice, peace, and the integrity of creation. In fact, we find ourselves at a pivotal moment in history with regard to global climate change. Scientists warn that global greenhouse gas emissions need to be reduced 80 percent below 1990 levels by the year 2050 in order to avert catastrophic consequences associated with global warming.

Energy choices, more than ever, are moral choices. Faced with the nexus of issues related to energy policy and climate change, and guided by the ecojustice norms and energy guidelines, Christian stewardship is expressed in three major areas of responsibility. Our witness begins at the personal level; it must be reflected in the practices and priorities of all organizations in our church; and it culminates in our advocacy for changes in public policy at all levels of government. What follows is a brief summary of these recommendations.

Individuals and families in our church are urged to pray for guidance, to study energy issues, to practice conservation and to invest in energy-efficient products. The recommendations also urge members of our church to shop locally, reduce their consumption of meat, to advocate for change in energy policies at all levels of government, and to invest in companies that show concern for the well-being of people and the planet.

The councils and agencies of our church are urged to become models of energy efficiency and proponents of renewable energy. A related recommendation advocates the establishment of a Presbyterian Energy Transformer Fund which would help congregations and other organizations in our church reduce their carbon footprint through investments in

energy efficiency, renewable energy production, and certified carbon offsets. Other recommendations encourage carbon neutral meetings, the use of loan and investment funds to promote energy efficiency and renewable energy, and the integration of sustainability issues and environmental issues in Presbyterian-related colleges, universities, and seminaries.

Finally, the following principles are recommended to guide our church's advocacy work regarding policy discussions and legislative proposals to revise energy policy in the context of global climate change. First, with our Lord, we will stand with "the least of these" (Matt. 25:40) and advocate for the poor and oppressed in present and future generations who are often the victims of environmental injustice and who are least able to mitigate the impact of global warming that will fall disproportionately upon them. Second, as citizens of the United States, which has historically produced more greenhouse gases than any other country, we implore our nation to accept its moral responsibility to address global warming. Third, as advocates for justice, our church challenges all nations to embrace their common but different responsibilities with regard to dealing with climate change.

On the basis of these principles and renewed ethical reflection on U.S. energy policy in the context of global warming, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) supports comprehensive, mandatory, and aggressive emission reductions that aim to limit the increase in Earth's temperature to two degrees Celsius or less from pre-industrial levels. Legislation should focus on the short-term goal of reducing U.S. greenhouse gas emissions 20 percent from 1990 levels by 2020, and 80 percent from 1990 levels by 2050.

In order to achieve these targets, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) supports legislative and policy proposals that:

- Internalize the social and environmental costs related to greenhouse gas emissions in the prices of fossil fuels.
- Shift subsidies and financial incentives toward industries specializing in renewable energy and energy efficiency and away from the fossil fuel and nuclear power industries.
- Adopt significantly increased efficiency standards for all energy consuming appliances, buildings, and vehicles.
- Mandate that an increasing percentage of the nation's energy supply be produced renewably and sustainably.
- Remove market barriers for producers of renewable energy.
- Encourage decentralized and distributed power generation.
- Place a moratorium on all new coal-fired and nuclear power plants until related environmental concerns are addressed.
- Limit exploration and exploitation of new fossil fuel supplies to parts of the nation where this can be done without adverse damage to people and the environment.
- Support a systemic shift to rail-based public transportation and urban planning that emphasizes mass transit.
- Revise U.S. national security policies.

The recommendations conclude by expressing gratitude to climate scientists in government, industry, academia and the United Nations, and to environmental public-interest groups and far-sighted political leaders, for their steadfast commitment to the common good and future welfare of all species. A final recommendation directs various officers in our church to advocate for this approach to national energy policy before Congress, the Executive branch, state legislatures, and regulatory agencies with the goal of restoring the United States of America to a leadership position in taking responsibility for reducing the scale and speed of global climate change.

#### Endnotes

1 All biblical citations are from the New Revised Standard Version.

2 European Renewable Energy Council and Greenpeace International, *Energy Revolution: A Sustainable World Energy Outlook*, January 2007, pg. 60, accessed online July 10, 2007 at <http://www.greenpeace.org/raw/content/new-zealand/press/reports/global-energy-report.pdf>.

3 Terry Tamminen, *Lives Per Gallon: The True Cost of Our Oil Addiction* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2006) pg. 13.

4 Energy Information Agency, *Short-Term Energy Outlook—July 2007*, accessed online July 23, 2007 at <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/steo/pub/a4tab.html>.

5 Evan Harrje, *The Real Price of Gasoline* (Washington, DC: International Center for Technology Assessment, 2000) cited in Tamminen, *Lives Per Gallon*, pg. 59.

6 Energy Information Administration, *World Proved Reserves of Oil and Natural Gas, Most Recent Estimates*, January 9, 2007, accessed online July 23, 2007 at <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/international/reserves.html>.

7 National Petroleum Council, *Facing the Hard Truths about Energy*, July 2007 pre-publication draft, Executive Summary, pg. 25, accessed online July 20, 2007 at <http://www.npc.org/>.

8 George W. Bush, “State of the Union Address by the President,” January 31, 2006, accessed online July 23, 2007 at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/stateoftheunion/2006/>.

9 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Fourth Assessment Report: The Physical Science Basis* (Geneva: IPCC Secretariat, February 2007), pp. 11-14, accessed online July 7, 2007 at <http://www.ipcc.ch/SPM2feb07.pdf>. This mean projection is for the fossil fuel-intensive A1F1 scenario, the worst of the six developed by the IPCC. Under this scenario greenhouse gas concentrations are projected to increase from approximately 430 ppm of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO<sub>2</sub>e) in 2005 to 1550 ppm CO<sub>2</sub>e by 2100. Even under the IPCC’s best case scenario (B1) greenhouse gas concentrations increase to 600 ppm CO<sub>2</sub>e by 2100, which they estimate will lead to a warming of 3.2°F by the end of this century—almost three times the rate of warming over the past 100 years.

10 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Fourth Assessment Report: Climate Change Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability* (Geneva: IPCC Secretariat, April 2007), pg. 8, accessed online July 7, 2007 at <http://www.ipcc.ch/SPM6avr07.pdf>.

11 U.S. Climate Change Science Program, *The Effects of Climate Change on Agriculture, Land Resources, Water Resources, and Biodiversity* (September 2007 public review draft), pg. 7, accessed online September 12, 2007 at <http://www.climatechange.gov/Library/sap/sap4-3/public-review-draft/sap4-3prd-all.pdf>.

12 Kevin A. Baumert, Timothy Herzog, and Jonathan Pershing, *Navigating the Numbers: Greenhouse Gas Data and International Climate Policy* (New York: WorldWatch Institute, 2005), pp. 31-33, accessed online September 29, 2007 at [http://www.wri.org/climate/pubs\\_description.cfm?pid=4093#pdf\\_files](http://www.wri.org/climate/pubs_description.cfm?pid=4093#pdf_files).

13 This statement was jointly adopted by the Presbyterian Church in the United States and the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. See, *Minutes*, Presbyterian Church in the United States, 1981, Part I, pp. 122, 413-425; and *Minutes*, The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1981, Part I, pp. 42, 86, 293-306.

14 The Office of the General Assembly, *Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice: A Report Adopted by the 202nd General Assembly (1990)*, (Louisville, KY: The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 1990). See <http://www.pcusa.org/environment/restore.htm>.

15 Overture 02-57. "On Revising the Denominational Policy on the Issue of Energy " (*Minutes*, 2002, Part I, pp. 72 and 596).

### Recommendations

The 218th General Assembly (2008):

1. Approves the study and recommendations entitled, *The Power to Change: U.S. Energy Policy and Global Warming*, to revise existing energy policy, *The Power to Speak Truth to Power* (hereinafter, referred to as the "1981 Energy Policy"). [The 1981 Energy Policy was jointly adopted by the 121st General Assembly (1981) of the Presbyterian Church in the United States (*Minutes*, Presbyterian Church in the United States, 1981, Part I, pp. 122, 413-25), and the 193rd General Assembly (1981) of The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (*Minutes*, The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1981, Part I, pp. 42, 86, 293-306).]
2. Urges individuals and families in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to do the following:
  - a. Pray, asking for God's forgiveness and for the power and guidance to enjoy and care for creation in new ways.
  - b. Study energy sources, their advantages and disadvantages, and the impacts they have on human communities, all species, and the ecological systems that support life on Earth.
  - c. Practice energy conservation as a form of thanksgiving and sharing by adjusting thermostats, walking, biking, carpooling, using mass transit, turning off lights and appliances, recycling, minimizing the use of plastic water bottles and other wasteful packaging, etc.
  - d. Purchase energy-efficient appliances and fuel-efficient vehicles for use at home and at work.
  - e. Purchase sustainably-grown food and other products from local producers in order to reduce the energy associated with producing, and shipping goods.
  - f. Reduce consumption of meat because the production of grain fed to most livestock is fossil fuel-intensive and their waste emits methane, which is a potent greenhouse gas.

g. Purchase Green-e certified energy and/or carbon offsets in the pursuit of a carbon-neutral lifestyle. Green-e certification ensures these payments result in additional installations of renewable energy generation capacity as well as verifiable and permanent environmental benefits.

h. Invest personal funds in the renewable energy industry and also in companies that demonstrate concern for the well-being of their workers, their production communities, and the environment.

i. Advocate for change and leadership within the church and in all forms of government regarding energy policy and global climate change.

3. With regard to the councils, governing bodies, and agencies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the 218th General Assembly (2008):

a. Urges synods and presbyteries to become models of energy-efficient institutions and proponents of renewable energy by

(1) stocking resource centers with information about energy issues;

(2) working with the New Church Development Committee to ensure that all new and remodeled churches meet high-efficiency standards;

(3) strengthening support for Stewardship of Creation Enablers, inviting them to provide workshops on energy and related concerns, and consulting with them to provide carbon-neutral meeting sites and transportation plans whenever possible;

(4) advocating before local, state, and federal governments for public policies that encourage energy efficiency and renewable energy generation; and

(5) adopting environmental education and energy conservation as high priorities at all Presbyterian camps and conference centers.

b. Urges the “Restoring Creation” program to establish a Presbyterian Green Energy Fund, which would help congregations and other organizations in our church reduce their carbon footprint through investments in energy efficiency, renewable energy production, and Green-e certified carbon offsets.

c. Urges the Office of the General Assembly to make future meetings as carbon neutral as possible (considering climate, travel requirements, amenities, and energy conservation efforts by hotels, conference centers, and academic institutions).

d. Urges the General Assembly Council, the Presbyterian Foundation, and the Board of Pensions to continue to improve the energy efficiency of the Louisville, Jeffersonville, Philadelphia, and other national agency offices.

e. Urges the Committee on Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI) to expand efforts to engage businesses on energy efficiency and conservation in manufacturing, transport, and product design; to work with companies on appropriate technology applications, including co-generation, wind, solar, biomass, geothermal, and low-head hydroelectric; to support solutions to the problem of nuclear waste; and to advocate that utilities establish incentives to reduce electricity, oil, and gas usage while also eliminating barriers for small power producers to interconnect with the power grid.

f. Urges the Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program, Inc., to continue to encourage energy efficiency, renewable energy technologies, and new and mixed uses such as adding generating capacity or housing to underused city facilities.

g. Urges presidents of Presbyterian-related colleges and universities to consider becoming a signatory of the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment, which obligates these schools to become carbon neutral in the future and to integrate sustainability into the curriculum.

h. Urges Presbyterian-related seminaries and conference centers to make environmental education on global climate change and energy part of their curricula; to take measures to reduce energy consumption; and to encourage holistic thinking about the relationships between technology and nature.

i. Urges the Stated Clerk and other people representing the PC(USA) in ecumenical programs and initiatives to explore and develop whenever possible joint statements and studies on energy policy with other communions or councils of communions, and the General Assembly agencies to join in appropriate coalitions with non-church bodies to reinforce these measures of practical discipleship.

4. Concerning the church's social responsibility regarding U.S. energy policy, the 218th General Assembly (2008):

a. Endorses and approves the following principles and stances that will guide our church's advocacy work regarding policy discussions and legislative proposals to revise energy policy in the context of global climate change:

With our Lord, we will stand with "the least of these" (Matt. 25:40) and advocate for the poor and oppressed in present and future generations who are often the victims of environmental injustice and who are least able to mitigate the impact of global warming that will fall disproportionately upon them.

As citizens of the United States, which has historically produced more greenhouse gases than any other country, and which is currently responsible for over a fifth of the world's annual emissions, we implore our nation to accept its moral responsibility to address global warming.

In agreement with four prior General Assemblies (202nd, 210th, 211th, and 215th) that have called on the U.S. government to ratify the Convention on Climate Change

and the Kyoto Protocol, we ask the U.S. government to do nothing less than repent of its efforts to block consensus and to work with the international community as it develops a binding agreement to replace the Kyoto Protocol when it expires in 2012.

As advocates for justice, we reject the claim that all nations should shoulder an equal measure of the burden associated with mitigating climate change. Industrialized nations like the United States[, which] have produced most of the emissions over the last three centuries deserve to shoulder the majority of the burden. Rapidly industrializing nations like China and India with very low per capita rates of energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions should not be expected to bear an equal share of the burden. Our church challenges all nations to embrace their common but different responsibilities with regard to dealing with climate change.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) supports comprehensive, mandatory, and aggressive emission reductions that aim to limit the increase in Earth's temperature to 2 degrees Celsius or less from pre-industrial levels. Legislation should focus on the short-term goal of reducing U.S. greenhouse gas emissions 20 percent from 1990 levels by 2020, and 80 percent from 1990 levels by 2050.

In order to achieve these targets, we support legislative and policy proposals that:

(1) Internalize the social and environmental costs related to greenhouse gas emissions in the prices of fossil fuels. A preferred way to capture these costs would be through an initial auction and continued trade of a fixed number of emissions allowances in a "cap and trade" approach applied to all sectors of the economy. Affirming "the polluter pays" principle, emissions allowances should be sold because giving them away simply rewards the largest polluters. While the initial price may need to be low at the outset to avoid adverse economic repercussions, price caps defeat the purpose of harnessing the market to achieve this social and ecological good. A separate tax based on the carbon content of fossil fuels could [complement] a cap and trade approach, but it should not replace it because a carbon tax lacks a guaranteed cap on total emissions. Revenues generated from either or both approaches should be utilized nationally to redress the regressive impact of higher energy prices on people who are poor, to increase funds for public transportation, to increase research and development as well as investment in renewable energy, and to encourage the purchase of energy efficient appliances and vehicles. Internationally, the United States needs to contribute funds to help poorer nations adapt to the social dislocation and ecological devastation caused by global climate change.

(2) Shift subsidies and financial incentives toward industries specializing in renewable energy and energy efficiency and away from the fossil fuel and nuclear power industries. One vital step would be to extend for ten years the federal tax credit for production of electricity from wind, solar, geothermal, closed-loop and open-loop biomass, landfill gas, and small irrigation power facilities. Similar incentives at the state and county level should be reauthorized and expanded. Subsidies can also influence personal consumption decisions. For example, "feebates" require purchasers of fuel-inefficient vehicles to pay a fee; these funds are then utilized to

offer purchasers of fuel-efficient vehicles a rebate on the purchase price. Federal research and development grants are another important financial incentive. These funds need to be increased, and a much larger percentage must be dedicated to renewable energy, alternative fuels, and energy efficiency. Funding for these measures can be made revenue-neutral by reducing subsidies to the oil, gas, and nuclear power industries.

(3) Adopt significantly increased efficiency standards for all energy consuming appliances, buildings, and vehicles. Recently, modest improvements have been made to federal laws regarding the energy efficiency of buildings and appliances as well as the nation's Corporate Automotive Fuel Economy Standards (CAFE). These increases are overdue and much needed, but states like California and New York should not be blocked from raising these standards if they wish to do so. Increased efficiency and fuel economy standards should be based on the best science available and in dialogue with the relevant industries, but ultimately legislated standards are more productive than voluntary goals negotiated with industries. In addition, public scrutiny must be brought to bear on regulatory agencies to ensure that they are insulated from undue industry influence.

(4) Mandate that an increasing percentage of the nation's energy supply be produced renewably and sustainably. More than half the nation's states have adopted renewable portfolio standards that impose differing mandates on energy providers. Not surprisingly, most of the investment in renewable energy production is taking place in these states. Adoption of a 20 percent national Renewable Energy Standard (RES) by 2020 would build on the success in the states. Environmental problems associated with ethanol production related to the federal Renewable Fuels Standard (RFS), however, indicate there can be dangers associated with ratcheting standards up too quickly. Any mandate must ensure that the energy is produced renewably and sustainably.

(5) Remove market barriers for producers of renewable energy. These barriers include expensive and overly complicated requirements for connecting to the electricity grid, insufficient transmission line capacity, and extremely low power purchase rates based on avoided costs from fossil fuel power plants that are not yet accountable for their impact on global warming. Both Germany and Japan have stimulated the renewable energy industry in their nations through requiring net billing and also mandating higher "feed-in" rates. Such measures would stimulate investment in residential solar and wind power in the United States and help restore the nation as a leader in technological innovation. Other initiatives to expedite transmission capacity are also critical to the expansion of renewable energy in the nation.

(6) Encourage decentralized and distributed power generation. Decentralized, residential renewable energy systems, and distributed generation from community wind farms can relieve pressure on the power grid, create new jobs, and empower local communities. State and federal tax credits are one way to encourage investment in decentralized and distributed renewable energy production. Flexible financing

schemes are also valuable. The state of Minnesota has pioneered a unique approach to community-based economic development (C-BED), which has resulted in the largest number of community-owned wind farms in the nation.

(7) Place a moratorium on all new coal-fired and nuclear power plants until related environmental concerns are addressed. Given the predominant role carbon dioxide plays in global warming and climate change, and given that coal-fired power plants are responsible for 40 percent of the nation's carbon dioxide emissions, it would be irresponsible to build new coal-fired power plants or coal-to-oil technologies until it can be demonstrated that the carbon can be captured economically and sequestered permanently. Similarly, given the extremely toxic danger that spent nuclear fuel poses to future generations for thousands of years, it is irresponsible to build new nuclear power plants until a permanent means of disposing of this waste is placed into service.

(8) Limit exploration and exploitation of new fossil fuel supplies to parts of the nation where this can be done without adverse damage to people and the environment. As the climate in the Arctic warms, it is doubtful that the economic benefits of drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge can outweigh the environmental damage that this will do to one of the nation's most beautiful and wild places. Another example of such a limit would be the ecological devastation associated with mountaintop mining in Appalachia.

(9) Support a systemic shift to rail-based public transportation and urban planning that emphasizes mass transit. These measures would discourage urban sprawl and the depletion of water and energy resources, especially in the Southwest. Farmland in and around cities should be preserved to maintain and increase the capacity for local food. Support for public transportation will also require substantial funding to repair the nation's highways, bridges, and dams. Efforts should be focused on increasing the quality of the nation's transportation and energy infrastructure, not on increasing the size of it.

(10) Revise U.S. national security policies. Decrease attempts to control oil resources owned by other nations and the profligate use of energy supplies to enforce inevitably temporary as well as massively tragic military interventions. Increase the authority of science-based international standards for addressing the issue of global climate change. Strive to decouple nuclear power from nuclear weapons production so as not to encourage a new round of nuclear proliferation.

b. Expresses gratitude to climate scientists in government, industry, academia and the United Nations, and to environmental public-interest groups and far-sighted political leaders, for their steadfast commitment to the common good and future welfare of all species.

c. Directs the Stated Clerk, the Presbyterian Washington Office, the Presbyterian United Nations Office, the Environmental Justice Office, and other General Assembly representatives to advocate for this approach to national energy policy before Congress, the Executive branch, state legislatures, and regulatory agencies, including those specifically

involved in the areas of climate change and international cooperation, with the goal of restoring the United States of America to a leadership position in taking responsibility for reducing the scale and speed of global climate change.

*(Item 09-10. This action derived from a resolution developed by the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy.)*

### **On Reinstating the Office of Environmental Justice**

The 218th General Assembly (2008) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) directs the Executive Director of the General Assembly Council to reinstate the Office of Environmental Justice in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as a vital and integral part of the ministry and mission of the church to help protect and save God's creation.

*(Item 08-10. This action derived from an overture from the Presbytery of the Heartland.)*

### **On the Use of Non-Disposable Food Service Items**

The 218th General Assembly (2008) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) requests Presbyterian congregations and individual members to highly encourage the use of non-disposable food service items, and to refrain from the use of disposable food service products, particularly styrofoam and other non-biodegradables; to use non-disposable bags for packing items purchased in the commercial market, and to refrain from using plastic bags; to choose tap or home or church-filtered water instead of bottled water or soda, and to refrain from purchasing those liquids in plastic bottles. Even though this represents only a part of what we can do to live in a more environmentally just manner, it is extremely important in beginning to live sustainable, healthy lives.

*(Item 09-02. This action derived from an overture from the Presbytery of Heartland.)*

***In the hope sustained by the Holy Spirit, we pledge to be peacemakers in the world and stewards of God's good creation, by working for ...equitable global trade and aid that protects local economies, cultures and livelihoods.***

### **On Endorsing the "Publish What You Pay" Campaign**

The 218th General Assembly (2008):

1. Endorses the "Publish What You Pay Campaign" (PWYP)<sup>1</sup>;
2. Directs the Stated Clerk and the Moderator to support in writing and sign the PWYP campaign appeal<sup>2</sup> on behalf of the 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2008) of the Presbyterian Church (USA);

3. Calls synods, presbyteries, and congregations to advocate for the mandatory disclosure of net taxes, fees, royalties, and other payments made by extractive industry companies, both multinational and state-owned enterprises, to all national governments on a disaggregated and country-by-country basis; and
4. [Resolves to] join worldwide efforts to curb the current threats posed by the destructive practices of the extractive industries.

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> [Publish What You Pay Web site](#) [The U.S. Coalition of PWYP is part of a global appeal for full transparency in the oil, gas and mining industries. Cf., Extractive Industries Transparency Disclosure Act now pending in Congress. ed]

<sup>2</sup> The written endorsements can be sent by e-mail to the [PWYP coordinator](#). Together with the written confirmation of the PC(USA)'s endorsement of the PWYP's appeal document, PWYP requests full contact information: e-mail, telephone, fax, mailing address, website, etc. The Joining Hands Against Hunger (JHAH) coordinators of the Presbytery of Chicago and of the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area could serve as contact persons to whom all communications from PWYP should be sent for any future advocacy activities.

*(Item 11-14. This action derived from an overture from the Presbytery of Chicago.)*

### **On Responsible Purchasing**

The 218th General Assembly (2008):

1. Affirms the work of the PC(USA) and Presbyterian Women in their efforts to become responsible consumers in the global economy by occasional procurement of sweatshop-free (sweatfree) and fair trade products, despite the lack of a PC(USA) purchasing policy related to sweatshops.
2. Affirms the existing PC(USA) ethical purchasing policies that prioritize procurement from racial-ethnic, minority, and women-led vendors and suppliers.
3. Requests that the General Assembly Council formally endorse the formation of the State and Local Government Sweatfree Consortium ending taxpayer support for sweatshops.
4. Requests that the General Assembly Council encourage congregations and presbyteries to actively lobby their respective state and local governments to join the Sweatfree Consortium.
5. Directs the Office of the General Assembly and the General Assembly Council to make a good faith effort to purchase products sourced from vendors and manufacturers that observe internationally accepted labor standards, respect internationally established health and safety standards, and provide benefits in accordance with local law or the industry standard (whichever is higher), and a non-poverty wage. Apparel will be the initial focus since it is known for child labor and sweatshop conditions, and accordingly it is a closely studied industry, and should be extended to other products as non-sweatshop sources become available. The Sweatfree Consortium once formed, will generate resources that will help PC(USA) implement and enforce its sweatfree policy.

6. [Requests,] when information assuring compliance with these standards is not readily available from the supplier or independent monitor, that the Office of the General Assembly and the General Assembly Council not contract for goods and services unless the provider is able to demonstrate active pursuit of compliance with the above practices. SweatFree Communities and the Sweatfree Consortium will maintain a list of noncompliant suppliers that fail to meet the criteria. Termination of relationships with vendors or manufacturers should be used only as a final option after thorough efforts to correct violations have failed. At the same time, brands or manufacturers who are unwilling to work towards compliance with such standards should not continue to supply goods to affiliates. Therefore, the consortium will assist affiliates in identifying brands and manufacturers that repeatedly refuse to take appropriate corrective action in response to consortium recommendations. Affiliates may require that bidders for applicable contracts not use companies or facilities on this list to supply goods.

7. Directs the Office of the General Assembly and the General Assembly Council to, whenever possible, purchase from factories and vendors whose production adheres to U.S. or country-of-origin environmental standards. The National Green Pages and the Responsible Purchasing Network's purchasing guide provide lists of screened and approved 'green' suppliers.

8. Requests that the General Assembly Council encourage congregations, presbyteries, camps, conferences, and other entities of the PC(USA) to adopt the responsible purchasing policy or design one of their own that upholds these principles.

9. Requests that all Presbyterians practice responsible consumerism, beginning with simplicity and non-acquisition whenever possible and responsible purchasing, including sweatfree and ecologically sound products where purchase is necessary. This would include a preference for locally produced products and food.

*(Item 08-17. This action is derived from an overture from the Presbytery of Baltimore.)*

***...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***

**On Peacemaking and the Pursuit of Justice**

The 218th General Assembly (2008)

1. Stands for constructive national and international policies based on peacemaking and the pursuit of justice and fairness of shalom;
2. Stands for international communication and cooperation, for conflict resolution by non-violent means, and for the enforcement of international law as formulated in the United Nations Charter, international treaties, and agreements;

3. Supports efforts to abolish war and to oppose the doctrine of preemptive war;
4. Promotes civil liberties and rights to due process; and
5. Opposes torture and degrading treatment of human beings, and support efforts for the promotion of human rights.

*(Item 11-16. This action derived from the Presbytery of the Twin Cities.)*

**To Repent, to Restore, to Rebuild and to Reconcile**  
**A Study Paper on Lessons learned and Directions Toward Peace in Iraq**

Executive Summary

Introduction

This paper states more fully the Christian basis for the terms and directions of the resolution, “Costly Lessons of the Iraq War.” It sees the term ‘repentance’ as in part offering a lens through which to view a revision of the international role played by the United States. The unilateralism embodied by the US since the end of the Cold War (1989) and especially in the most recent period has missed opportunities for capitalizing on a ‘peace dividend’ in favor of the US taking a proactive stance in ‘reshaping the world’. Regime change in Iraq, as part of a stated plan to ‘democratize’ the Middle East, allowed this ideology to come to the fore with massively tragic results. But the US may now be at a formative moment of reassessment, brought on the by the costs and consequences of the Iraq war. A new approach for US engagement with the world will likely require a Christian vision that builds on a deep conviction that there is a better way.

Biblical and Theological Grounding of the Four ‘R’s

Although challenging, the call to restore, rebuild and reconcile—and importantly, repent, is grounded in the redirection found through the peace of Christ. This redirection reveals a basic coherence of means and ends, a revelation that brings violent means and peaceful goals into sharp contradiction. The peace of Christ is neither easy nor cheap, neither for God, nor for us. It is a call to sacrifice, and just as individuals ground the ordering of their lives around their faith, so must the church in community stand for truths that put even nations in their place. We must repent for confusing comfort and security with being centered in God’s promise. We must honor our dead and wounded, but not use their immense sacrifices to justify the slaughter of innocents, nor to limit the fulfillment of the lives of others so that our own be may be enriched. Idolatry and injustice go hand in hand, just as do peace and the restoration of justice, through the healing of ‘every disease’ found in Jesus of Nazareth. Repentance on a personal level leads to a restoration of inner connection with God and a new or renewed growth in the Spirit. While this is not the work of nations of

themselves, it has a communal dimension sometimes seen in national policy, and in the biblical history of Israel, we see the prophets repeatedly calling on their nation and others to repent. Restoration has a material component, as underscored sharply in James, and we are reminded of what causes wars—covetousness, vanity, pride and double mindedness rather than humble faith.

The kingdom or reign of God is an intrinsically social reality and provides the link between personal redemption and communal participation. Jesus refused to exalt himself, instead taking the form of a servant, and thereby struggling against, and rising victorious over, illegitimate ‘principalities and powers’, proclaiming an alternative order based in God’s equal love and non-violence rather than domination. The role of forgiveness and reconciliation after the fall of dictatorships (South Africa, Eastern Europe) speaks to the power of truth to help heal those who have suffered. Forgiveness is seen as distinctive and freeing by Christians and non-Christians alike, and history has seen such moments of reconciliation where politicians play the symbolic representative role for the community in the enactment of political forms of repentance (or apology) and forgiveness (or pardon). Civil society, too, has a role to play, and political organizing can help change a country’s motivations and importantly, address its fears—particularly if it can appeal to both patriotism and moral empowerment. The role of the religious peacemaker is to move from the internalization of the peace of Christ to the sharing of that peace, without false innocence or arrogance, with those who are in conflicts.

#### Summary of Previous Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Resolutions on the Iraq War (2003/2004)

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) has issued a number of background papers, policy recommendations and study guides during the course of its study of the situation in Iraq for over five years. The issues are complex and have generated controversy within the church, as well as without, but the urgency of addressing them remains. The actions of the General Assemblies of 2003 and 2004 in approving the resolutions “*Iraq and Beyond*” and “*Iraq: Our Responsibility and the Future*” respectively, embodied a moral judgment that the military action in Iraq failed the tests of moral legitimacy commonly posed by just war thinking. A different criticism would later develop—one that reflected disillusionment with how the war was being carried out and a judgment that it had been badly managed rather than ill-conceived. Both criticisms would culminate in early 2006 to provide increasingly widespread public support for bringing the military action to an end, although the current administration has rejected all such calls for abandoning its military venture. While the public debate continues, it is important to distinguish between withdrawing from fatigue or disillusionment as opposed to more fully understanding and redressing the occupation on moral grounds. It is the role of the church to insist that the moral reasons not be overlooked irrespective of whether or not opponents of the war are successful in bringing some cessation to the military action.

#### Reconsideration of War Motivations, Objectives and Decision Framework

The wisdom of taking military action in Iraq has been a source of debate from the Fall of 2002, before the March invasion. The rationales involving weapons of mass destruction, the

necessity of overthrowing an evil and dictatorial regime, the role of conventional warfare in a “war on terror,” and the promotion of democracy in the region have all been deeply discredited through information which has since surfaced, for example in the work of the Kean-Hamilton Commission. This is especially the case for a virtually unilateral attack (with always limited British support), as there is little warrant in international law to entitle a single nation to delegate to itself the right to judge another nation ‘evil’ and on that basis initiate military action against it. Additionally, democracy—an ostensible goal--depends not merely on freedom, but upon the acceptance of a ‘covenantal’ responsibility between the members of a society who agree to accept majority decisions as having a claim on their behavior. It will not arise simply from the removal of a tyrannical regime.

Some critics of the war maintain that the primary motivation for the use of force was to protect America’s access to oil (Greenspan is cited on this). More impetus has been shown to come from a ‘neoconservative’ ideology that would consolidate the power of the US as a ‘benign hegemon’ and maintain its ‘unipolar’ dominance on the scene of world affairs. Men who became leading Bush administration officials had initially proposed the invasion of Iraq to Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel and then to Bill Clinton, well prior to 9/11. This pro-war faction sorely underestimated the complexity of, or indeed even need for, nation-building, while focusing instead on a projected advancement of the war to Iran and Hezbollah in a sweeping vision of US force bringing peace and stability to the world. State Department plans for the post-invasion period were largely disregarded.

### Conduct of the War

As part of the criteria for a war to be considered ‘just’, it must not only be morally compelling in its justification, but undertaken in an operationally productive and responsible manner. From that angle, the treatment of enemies has been one of the most striking and troubling aspects of this war’s conduct. The use of interrogation techniques that cross the line into torture, the rendition of prisoners to other jurisdictions so they may be subject to more stringent and unacceptable treatment, the long detainment of individuals without access to legal counsel and redress, and numbers of detainee deaths have been far too prevalent to overlook. Opposition to the use of torture is an extension of the commitment to human rights that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has long espoused.

Additionally, conducting a war without the mobilization of the country’s human and economic resources means that the war is being carried out in a way that will raise the least resistance from the public and allow the average citizen to avoid its impact or feel its costs. The burden, seen in rising rates of veteran suicide and mental stress, has been on over-used and under-armored troops, while the costs of the war add to the nation’s debt. Coupled with the above, the usage of private contractors to supplement military operations in Iraq raises serious moral concerns. In addition to the moral ambiguity of replacing properly designated and disciplined members of the armed forces with private contractors, which has on numerous occasions led to the deviation from acceptable standards of behavior, this practice has also created a new industry which profits from war-making.

### The Problem of Assessing Consequences and Responsibility

Assessing the current situation in Iraq also requires a careful look at the way decisions and developments in Iraq are presented. The use of an active duty military officer, such as General Petraeus, directly under Presidential authority, to advocate for Administration policies, means giving a tacit dismissal of the suggestions offered by a thoughtful and distinguished group, such as the Iraq Study group chaired by Messrs. Baker and Hamilton, whose position is partly supported by this study paper. It is a contrast between an image of authority and the actuality of careful deliberation, and it highlights the need to extend consideration beyond our borders to the witness of others, not least Christians in Iraq, who have expressed great grief over the consequences of American policy.

### Reconciliation and Its Alternatives

Various suggestions for dealing with the situation in Iraq, each with multiple versions, are being explored. These include the continued, and perhaps increased, use of force to achieve the currently stated goals. These goals, for some, extend beyond Iraq to the overall use of force against any perception of threat by 'Islamofacism', something that is taken to include Iran. This is a continuation of the neoconservative approach and embodies a radical unilateralism. The sharpest contrast to the above comes from those who advocate an immediate withdrawal, believing that the turmoil in Iraq will settle in the absence of an incendiary US presence. Also explored is a more gradual departure that foresees a phased withdrawal as conditions improve. This approach may not sufficiently address the complexities that drive the political, military, and religious tensions on the ground. An increased understanding of the very vital role that faith plays in the region, joint Muslim-Christian peacemaking, and humble self-reflection and engagement on the part of the Christian community is necessary. A partition option is also explored, as is a transition toward a UN-linked internationalization. The internationalization option would entail the UN taking over as the primary actor, and would require the difficult US admission that its largely unilateral action has been unsuccessful or wrong—although this is precisely the difficult repentance and truth-telling that are advocated. To move in this last direction would be consistent with policies long supported by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

### Resources for Further Christian Witness

Finally the paper offers ways in which Christian faith can help make it possible to act with wisdom in dealing with public issues such as the turmoil in Iraq. Along with an assessment of the over-reliance on military force, the paper maintains a solid commitment to internationalism and the knowledge that evil cannot be quashed once and for all by some heroic venture—a stance that tempts the strong rather than the weak. The paper does not idealize the UN, nor the difficulties in reconciling Sunni and Shia parties. Yet mature faith also helps to counter fear, and the countering of fear helps to counter the pressures that so readily escalate into paranoid behavior. Those who purvey fear work the system to their advantage as long as such fears are present and as long as the public has acquired no offsetting source of confidence. We believe the Christian faith is that source. Faith can also contribute to the creation of a culture that can deal with antagonism and hostility by keeping communication open—even when it reveals persistent and tragic hostility. Finally, a third contribution of mature Christian faith to international affairs is the willingness to acknowledge that our actions have been wrong. We need to seek forgiveness, pursue

attempts at reconciliation, and repudiate the central premises of a policy that has appeared to pursue domination under the cloak of idealistic intentions.

The study paper thus concludes with the recognition that the US is in a very different place after 5 years of war in both Iraq and Afghanistan, no more secure from terrorism, burdened by substantial and growing debt, facing rising energy prices and a weakening economy, with large blocs of foreign opinion ranged against us, particularly in the Muslim world. One of the resolution's recommendations, for a consultative study process with colleges and seminaries on how to teach peace and reach out in faith to a new generation of thinkers, addresses this new context, so different from the Cold War/nuclear disarmament period when the 1980 policy base on which our Peacemaking work builds was written.

### **On Building Peace in Iraq**

The 218th General Assembly (2008):

1. Prays, in a spirit of deep humility for God's justice and peace to prevail in Iraq; and recognizing and heeding God's call to love all persons as made in God's own image, and even to pray for our enemies, encourages all Presbyterians to be in intentional and regular prayer for everyone in and of Iraq: for Iraqi civilians, Christian, Muslim, Jew, Yezidi; for soldiers and armed actors; for the refugees and the displaced; for the tortured and their torturers; and for insurgents, kidnapers, and terrorists, for all are God's beloved, all are in need of the transformation of God's love and God's peace.
2. Commends and thanks the peacemakers who have worked nonviolently to end the war in Iraq through prayers, vigils, and acts of resistance and witness such as the actions organized by the Christian Peace Witness for Iraq; and encourages all Presbyterians to participate enthusiastically in peacemaking efforts to end the occupation of Iraq.
3. Commends and thanks members of the armed forces, and their loved ones, for their service and sacrifice.
4. Calls upon the United States government to support our military personnel by granting speedy discharges to conscientious objectors; fully funding veterans' benefits; ensuring that injured service personnel and veterans have the best medical, mental health, and rehabilitation care available; and providing generous benefits to surviving family members.
5. Calls upon the United States government to develop and implement a lasting peaceful solution, responsibly bring the troops home, and reaffirm the call of the 216th General Assembly (2004) for the United States government to engage with the international community through the United Nations and other international agencies to cooperate with the government of Iraq in providing security, peacekeeping forces, and funding the rebuilding of the country.
6. Calls upon the United States and all member states of the United Nations to establish and fully fund a United Nations peace-building mission for Iraq to work in partnership with Iraqi leaders, neighboring nations, and appropriate international governmental and

nongovernmental organizations to establish security in Iraq, rebuild institutions and infrastructure, resettle and assist refugees, and initiate a process of truth and reconciliation to promote healing and forgiveness.

7. Calls upon the United States and other responsible nations to voluntarily make restitution in an amount adequate to repair war damage; to fully investigate, and where appropriate, in accordance with the principles of due process recognized in U.S. and international law, to prosecute all charges of war crimes including torture and mistreatment of prisoners; and to cooperate completely with any international investigations of war crimes committed by any party to the conflict in Iraq.

8. Calls upon the United States to remove all weapons, mines, depleted uranium, and other military waste products from Iraq; to repair other damage to the environment, including priceless archaeological sites.

9. Calls upon the United States to return full direct control of Iraq's oil resources and oil revenues to Iraq.

10. Directs the Stated Clerk to communicate this action to the president of the United States, members of the U.S. Congress, and the secretary-general of the United Nations.

11. Receives the study paper "To Repent, To Restore, To Re-Build, and to Reconcile" (Item 11-24), and directs that it be posted on the website of the Office of the General Assembly and be commended for study throughout the church. (See Executive Summary above.)

12. Commends to the church the call of the 216th General Assembly (2004) for the church to express its pastoral concern for and offer pastoral care to members of the United States armed forces serving their country in the war in Iraq and their families as well as for veterans of the war who have returned home ("Iraq: Our Responsibility and the Future," *Minutes*, 2004, Part I, pp. 864ff).

13. Directs the General Assembly Council to continue and expand the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s commitment to relief efforts in Iraq in cooperation with our ecumenical partners, to ministries that address human needs in Iraq caused by the war, and to long-term development efforts to assist in the rebuilding of the country.

14. Calls upon all presbyteries, congregations, and members within the PC(USA) to intentionally, personally, and concretely work to bring healing, peace, justice, and care to all affected by the war in Iraq, not only through our prayers but through the giving of our resources, time, money, and very selves to improve the lives and future of all involved, especially the hurting, the poor, the oppressed, and those whose lives have been damaged by the war.

15. Prays for, calls for, and works for a just and peaceful future for the nation and people of Iraq which includes the establishing of a just, stable, and democratic government and the timely departure of U.S. military forces and their contractors as soon as it is possible to leave the nation in an appropriately stable, just, and self-sustaining form.

*(Item 11-10. This action derived from an overture from the Presbytery of Baltimore and incorporates material from the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta and the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy.)*

### **On Supporting Those Who Feel Called to Seek Status as Conscientious Objectors**

1. The 218th General Assembly (2008) reaffirms the church's position on the freedom of conscience, especially as it relates to a person's status as a conscientious objector against participating in the armed services, (cf. the 215th General Assembly (2003) statement: "On Strengthening Our Christian Peacemaking Vision and Witness in Wartime," *Minutes*, 2003, Part I, p. 651).
2. Therefore, the 218th General Assembly (2008):
  - a. Encourages the Peacemaking Program to produce and identify study guides and discernment materials for individuals, congregations, and presbyteries to help church members and their friends be able to articulate God's calling on their lives in regard to participating in the armed forces, and war. Such materials will be made available on the denomination's Website, with notice of its accessibility sent to every congregation and presbytery in the denomination.
  - b. Encourages presbyteries to provide education opportunities for ministers, military chaplains, and sessions on how to fulfill their responsibility of educating young people about issues of faith, conscience, and war, including civic alternatives to serving the country through the armed forces.
  - c. Encourages presbyteries and sessions to create a structure to document and support those who feel called to seek status as conscientious objectors to participation in the armed forces, or war. Active members of the church can now register with the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly for conscientious objector status, and certificates are sent to the church for their records and for the church member (G-5.0202) (2003 Statement—*Minutes*, 2003, Part I, p. 651, Recommendations 2, 3. Also found in "Presbyterians and Military Service—PDS #7027005035). Encourages the Stated Clerk, presbyteries, and sessions to extend this ministry to non-confirmed baptized members (G-5.0201) and to attending non-members of the church as a function of the church's ongoing pastoral care, outreach, and work of reconciliation (G-5.0301a-c).
  - d. Directs the Stated Clerk of the PC(USA) to communicate the denominational stances and policies to members of the U.S. Administration, the Department of Defense, each branch of the armed forces, military chaplains, and others to include those Presbyterians who have discerned that they are conscientious objectors with all the rights and responsibilities of official conscientious objector status.

### **On War, Mercenaries and Profiteering**

The 218th General Assembly (2008):

1. Opposes the use of armed private military contractors paid to perform security, intelligence, training, and military operational services traditionally rendered by U.S. military and other U.S. government personnel in wars, military conflicts, or any type of military operations because it is immoral to wage war or kill essentially for private gain, even if the war, occupation, or potential use of force is justifiable, and because of the additional costs and lack of accountability of these forces].
2. Directs the Stated Clerk and appropriate offices of the General Assembly Council, to support the development and enforcement of laws to prohibit the use of such private military/security forces, whose work closely resembles that of mercenaries in earlier historical periods.
3. Directs the Stated Clerk to petition the Congress of the United States and enter into 'Friend of the Court' requests to review and revise the law[s] applicable to military contractors and other civilian employees of the United States in order that human rights abuses and criminal acts committed abroad by military contractors and other civilian employees fall within the jurisdiction of U.S. criminal law when the Uniform Code of Military Justice does not apply, and that Congress further be urged to review past instances of human rights violations and serious violations of law by military contractors.
4. Directs the Stated Clerk and appropriate General Assembly Council offices to petition and otherwise advocate that the Congress and the attorney general of the United States investigate war profiteering in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, both by private military contractors and others. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) further requests that, as in the American Civil War, World War I, World War II, and the Korean War, an excess profits tax be assessed against any company found to be engaged in war profiteering, recognizing that it is immoral to use a time of war or national emergency to expand profits while many soldiers' families live in poverty and all official U.S. personnel bear the primary risks and sacrifices of the war.

*(Item 11-17. This action derived from an overture from the Presbytery of Scioto Valley; approved as amended.)*

### **Regarding Assistance for Iraqi Refugees**

The 218th General Assembly (2008):

Recognizes, supports, and applauds the efforts of all United States government employees now assisting Iraqi refugees and displaced persons to the extent possible in Iraq and neighboring countries;

Strongly advocates [that] the United States government act more quickly to provide haven in the United States for threatened Iraqi refugees and displaced persons regardless of their religious faith, after screening for public health and security risks;

Strongly advocates [that] the United States government provide adequate staff, resources, and simplified procedures to rapidly implement an improved Iraqi refugee resettlement program;

Encourages churches and presbyteries to welcome Iraqi refugees within their region, sponsoring and assisting in their resettlement; and

Directs the Washington office of PC(USA) to advocate for legislation supporting resettlement of Iraqi refugees in the United States.

*(Item 11-09. This action derived from an overture from the Presbytery of Lake Huron.)*

### **On Addressing the Violence and Suffering Inflicted on Iraqi Women During the Current Prolonged War**

The 218th General Assembly (2008) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) [resolves to] address the pain, violence, and suffering being inflicted upon many Iraqi women during the current prolonged war by:

1. Communicating to the Iraqi government our concern for equal rights and justice for women in Iraq; deploring the dramatic increase in abuses since 2004; and urging steps be taken to improve women's status in all areas of Iraqi society];
2. Communicating to the United States government, through letters to the president, the members of Congress, and to the secretary of state, our concern for equal rights and justice for women in Iraq and urging that the U.S. government work with the Iraq government toward correcting inequities and lost civil rights by Iraqi women<sup>1</sup>;
3. Encouraging all sessions and presbyteries, as well as women's and men's organizations within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), to engage in study, prayer, and dialogue about the issues of violence against and suppression of women in Iraq;
4. Expressing our solidarity with our partner churches in Iraq as well as with the World Council of Churches, the Middle East Council of Churches, the Fellowship of Middle East Evangelical Churches, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, and leaders of the Muslim world assisting them in attempts to address the issue and the difficult conditions under which they are living.
5. Affirming our belief in the value, dignity, and rights of every human being;
6. Asserting our conviction that demands for justice by Iraqi women require efforts to bring their situations before fair tribunals, especially when extreme actions silence those who are oppressed<sup>2</sup>;

#### Endnotes

1. Isobel Coleman, "Women, Islam and the New Iraq," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2006 Summary: Although questions of implementation remain, the new Iraqi constitution makes Islam the law of the land. This need not mean trouble for Iraq's women, however. Sharia is open to a wide range of interpretations, some quite egalitarian. If Washington still hopes for a liberal order in Iraq, it should start working with progressive Muslim scholars to advance women's rights through religious channels.

2. "To be reconciled to God is to be sent into the world as [God's] reconciling community. This community, the church universal, is entrusted with God's message of reconciliation and shares [the] labor of healing the enmities, which separate men [and women] from God and from each other. . . ." (*The Book of*

*Confessions*, “The Confession of 1967,” 9.31); “We trust in God, whom Jesus called Abba, Father. In sovereign love God created the world good, and makes everyone equally in God’s image, male and female, of every race and people, to live as one community” (*The Book of Confessions*, “A Brief Statement of Faith,” 10.3, lines 27-32).

(Item 11-11. This action derived from an overture from the Presbytery of Providence.)

### **On Peace and Justice in Israel and Palestine**

The 218th General Assembly (2008):

1. Affirms the obligation of the church to speak to the governments of the United States and all other nations where it sees those governments violating the commandments of God. In the words of The Theological Declaration of Barmen, which speaks to the dependence of the Church on the Word of God and its independence from any state or ideology, “we reject the false doctrine, as though there were areas of our life in which we would not belong to Jesus Christ, but to other lords . . . . The state has by divine appointment the task of providing for justice and peace . . . [The church] calls to mind the Kingdom of God, God’s commandment and righteousness, and thereby the responsibility both of rulers and of the ruled. . . .” (*The Book of Confessions*, 8.15, 8.22). The sovereignty of God thus judges all claims of sovereign nationhood, all boundaries, all exercises of force, and all uses of resources by human beings. The Church is thus called to help discern where the Spirit is working in the world, guided by Scripture and its confessions.
2. Endorses the “Amman Call” regarding Arab-Israeli peace, issued by the World Council of Churches’ conference, “Churches Together for Peace and Justice in the Middle East,” at Amman, Jordan, June 18-20, 2007, including its affirmation of the U.N. resolutions that are the basis of a projected “two-state” solution, a shared Jerusalem, and the human rights of refugees and occupied peoples, its call to resist extremism and push for reconciliation, and its commitment to imperatives of ecumenical solidarity in action for Just Peace, directing that the Amman Call be printed in the *Minutes* of the General Assembly and considered in any study processes of the church.
3. Directs appropriate offices of the General Assembly Council to provide video, cyber, and print resources on the church’s historic concern for justice and peace in Israel and Palestine, such as those proposed by the Presbytery of Atlanta, using existing materials whenever possible, including back issues of *Church & Society* as suggested, to interpret such matters as Mission Responsibility Through Investment, the status of Jerusalem, the impact of the security barrier (or “wall”), etc.
4. Commends the nonviolent witness of the Christians in Palestine and Israel with whom we share membership in the one Body of Christ, joining them in prayer and mutual remembrance, advocating for fair treatment for them and their neighbors.
5. Encourages Presbyterian individuals, congregations, and councils to take pilgrimages and trips to Israel and Palestine that are in harmony with our principles, specifically that include: significant time visiting local Christians and church leaders, significant time in the Occupied Territories (witnessing conditions, helping sustain isolated and impoverished local

economies), opportunities to meet Israeli and Palestinian peacemakers, and opportunities to engage in interfaith discussion of a range of perspectives; such travel to be assisted and resourced as feasible by the General Assembly Council, mission personnel, the Israel/Palestine Network, and our ecumenical partners in the region, as outlined by the Presbytery of East Iowa, all with the goals of helping the church grow in solidarity, mercy, and peacemaking.

6. In continuing the process of corporate engagement with companies supporting or profiting from the occupation of Palestine and/or other violence in the region, instructs the Committee on Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI) to report regularly to the General Assembly Council on its communication and the compliance, or lack thereof, by Caterpillar, Motorola, and other corporations involved with regard to General Assembly guidelines and concerns for justice and human rights.

7. Requests that the full texts of all overtures submitted on the Middle East be considered in the report on the Middle East recommended by the General Assembly Council to be prepared for 2010.

*(Item 11-01. This action derived from an overture from the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta; an alternative text was approved.)*

### **On Being a Voice for Victims of Violence in Israel and Palestine**

The 218th General Assembly (2008) resolves to:

1. Be a voice for the victims of violence in both Israel and Palestine. We ask PC(USA) members, congregations, committees, and other entities to become nonpartisan advocates for peace. As such, we will not over-identify with the realities of the Israelis or Palestinians. Instead we will identify with the need for peacemaking voices in the midst of horrific acts of violence and terror.
2. Focus our energy on the United States government, demanding that it assume an intensive and unrelenting role as a peacemaker, bringing together the opposing parties in forums where reasonable people can reach reasonable compromises about highly complex issues.
3. Condemn all acts of violence against innocent civilians. We will avoid taking broad stands that simplify a very complex situation into a caricature of reality where one side clearly is at fault and the other side is clearly the victim.

*(Item 11-06. This action derived from an overture from National Capital Presbytery.)*

### **On Preparing a Study on Israel-Palestine Within the Context of the Middle East**

The 218th General Assembly (2008) requests that the Moderators of the 218th, 217th, and 216th General Assemblies (2008), (2006), and (2004) select a nine-member committee from

a broad spectrum of viewpoints from PC(USA) members to prepare a comprehensive study, with recommendations, that is focused on Israel/Palestine within the complex context of the Middle East. The study should include an evaluation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s mission and relationships, including an assessment of the future for the Christian presence and witness in the Middle East, an overview of the complex interactions among religions, cultures, and peoples that characterize the region, an analysis of U.S. policies that impact the area, and steps to be taken with our partners in the Middle East and the United States to foster justice, improve interfaith relations, and nurture the building of peace toward a secure and viable future for all, and report back to the 219th General Assembly (2010).

*(Item 11-28. This action derived from a recommendation of the General Assembly Council; approved as amended.)*

### **Report from Mission Responsibility Through Investment**

The 218th General Assembly (2008):

1. Receives the report of the Committee on Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI) of its engagement with corporations involved in Israel, Gaza, East Jerusalem, and the West Bank.
2. Calls upon all corporations doing business in the region to confine their business activity solely to peaceful pursuits, and refrain from allowing their products or services to support or facilitate violent acts by Israelis or Palestinians against innocent civilians, construction and maintenance of settlements or Israeli-only roads in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, the Israeli military occupation of Palestinian territory, and construction of the Separation Barrier as it extends beyond the 1967 "Green Line" into Palestinian territories.
3. Urges all corporations doing business in the region to seek proactive ways to promote respect for human rights, peace building, and equal employment opportunity.
4. Directs the General Assembly Council, through its Committee on Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI), to continue the corporate engagement process, and report on its status with any recommendations to the 219th General Assembly (2010).

*(Item 11:27. This action derived from a recommendation of the General Assembly Council.)*

### **On Peace With Iran**

The 218th General Assembly (2008) directs the Stated Clerk to send the following resolution to the President of the United States of America and the United States Congress:

1. That the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) supports a peaceful, diplomatic means to resolve the tensions developing as a result of Iran's pursuit of its nuclear program, between the United States and Iran.

2. That the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) calls for direct, unconditional negotiations between the United States and Iran with the goal of finding and implementing a peaceful resolution.
3. That the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is opposed to preemptive military action by any nation against Iran.]
4. That the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) calls for a renewed effort at all levels — people-to-people, interfaith groups, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and government — to help the United States and Iran eliminate the tensions that have existed between our two nations and to unite the American and Iranian people in a common effort to solve the problems of poverty, illness, and climate change.

*(Item 11-33. This action derived from a Commissioners' Resolution; approved as amended.)*

### **On Affirming the Declaration of Principles for a Presidential Executive Order on Prisoner Treatment, Torture and Cruelty**

That the 218th General Assembly (2008) do the following:

1. Affirm the *Declaration of Principles for a Presidential Executive Order on Prisoner Treatment, Torture and Cruelty*, as developed by The National Religious Campaign Against Torture, The Center for Victims of Torture, and Evangelicals for Human Rights, which states:

Though we come from a variety of backgrounds and walks of life, we agree that the use of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment against prisoners is immoral, unwise, and un-American.

In our effort to secure ourselves, we have resorted to tactics which do not work, which endanger US personnel abroad, which discourage political, military, and intelligence cooperation from our allies, and which ultimately do not enhance our security.

Our President must lead our nation back to our core principles. We must be better than our enemies, and our treatment of prisoners captured in the battle against terrorism must reflect our character and values as Americans.

Therefore, we believe the President of the United States should issue an Executive Order that provides as follows:

*The "Golden Rule."* We will not authorize or use any methods of interrogation that we would not find acceptable if used against Americans, be they civilians or soldiers.

*One national standard.* We will have one national standard for all US personnel and agencies for the interrogation and treatment of prisoners. Currently, the best expression of that standard is the US Army Field Manual, which will be used until any other interrogation technique has been approved based on the Golden Rule principle.

*The rule of law.* We will acknowledge all prisoners to our courts or the International Red Cross. We will in no circumstance hold persons in secret prisons or engage in disappearances. In all cases, prisoners will have the opportunity to prove their innocence in ways that fully conform to American principles of fairness.

*Duty to protect.* We acknowledge our historical commitment to end the use of torture and cruelty in the world. The US will not transfer any person to countries that use torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.

*Checks and balances.* Congress and the courts play an invaluable role in protecting the values and institutions of our nation and must have and will have access to the information they need to be fully informed about our detention and interrogation policies.

*Clarity and accountability.* All US personnel—whether soldiers or intelligence staff—deserve the certainty that they are implementing policy that complies fully with the law. Henceforth all US officials who authorize, implement, or fail in their duty to prevent the use of torture and ill-treatment of prisoners will be held accountable, regardless of rank or position.

3. Encourage individuals, congregations, and middle governing bodies to lift up our commitment to human rights, the elimination of torture, and to ethical standards in interrogation.
4. Direct the Peacemaking Program to identify or create devotional, study, worship, and homiletic resources, and make them available on the Web so that individuals, congregations, and middle governing bodies can lift up our opposition to torture and our commitment to human rights and ethical standards in interrogation.
2. Direct the Stated Clerk to communicate to the president of the United States, the major candidates for the presidency, and to others in the federal government charged with oversight of the policies and practices of interrogations this action and the related positions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) on issues related to torture.

*(Item 09-20. This action derived from a Commissioners' Resolution; it was approved as amended with a comment commending the 217<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2006) for their action in approving "Human Rights in a Time of Terrorism and Torture," Minutes, 2006, Part I, pp. 867ff.)*

### **Report on Human Rights in Colombia**

The 218th General Assembly (2008):

1. Calls on the members and congregations of the PC(USA) to study the situation in Colombia, diligently pray for the work of the Presbyterian Church of Colombia, and advocate with senators, representatives, and the president of the United States to lay down the weapons of violence and support the nonviolent struggle of the churches and civil

society of Colombia and those in the U.S. who stand beside Colombians to end the violence by:

- a. Withdrawing military support to the government of Colombia.
  - b. Reorienting U.S. policies toward Colombia in such a way as to encourage a more equitable distribution of that country's immense wealth, and to protect the rights of groups threatened by the interests of large corporations, including indigenous people, Afro-Colombians, labor leaders, human rights workers, and many campesinos.
  - c. Ending the aerial fumigation for coca crops and focusing on programs that provide higher levels of support for farmers to convert to alternative crops and that reduce demand for drugs in the United States.
  - d. Transferring U.S. support to the growing civil society committed to democracy and nonviolence.
  - e. Providing aid to strengthen health care, education, and nutrition, especially among the displaced.
  - f. Increasing aid for resettlement of displaced persons in their homelands.
  - g. Channeling aid through nongovernmental organizations.
  - h. Supporting the commendable work of the United Nations in Colombia, especially the work of the high commissioner of refugees with internal refugees, displaced women, and threatened indigenous communities.
  - i. Ratifying and urging Colombia to also ratify, the United Nations Convention Against Corruption.
2. Directs the World Mission ministry area, in consultation with the appropriate entities of the General Assembly Council (GAC) and the Office of the General Assembly (OGA), to continue to monitor the situation in Colombia, and to keep the whole church abreast of these findings; and to offer advice and counsel, as needed, about how this denomination can continue to support the peacekeeping efforts of our partners in Colombia.
  3. Directs the Presbyterian Washington Office (PWO) to continue to educate the members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and their representatives in the Congress of the United States of America about the effect of American legislation on the lives of individual Colombian citizens with particular emphasis on Plan Colombia and the Free Trade Agreement.
  4. Directs the Presbyterian United Nations Office (PUNO) to continue to represent the concerns of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to the committees and delegates of the United Nations.

5. Affirms and further encourages the work of the Accompaniment Program of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) that watches over and shadows vulnerable and threatened Colombia citizens as they seek justice for their most threatened and needy populations.
6. Directs the appropriate entities of the General Assembly Council (GAC), in consultation with the Office of the General Assembly (OGA), to continue to monitor and address human rights violations in the United States, and in other nations brought to their attention by the members of this denomination and/or the partner churches.
7. Directs the Stated Clerk to write to the members of Congress of the United States of America, urging them not to ratify the Free Trade Agreement with Colombia, which would have grave consequences for workers, indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations, and the environment.

*(Item 11-18. This action derives from a report from the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy; approved as amended.)*

### **Concerning Human Rights Violations in the Philippines**

In light of the numerous and well-documented human rights violations committed against church leaders and civil society groups in the Philippines since 2001, and to affirm new measures of solidarity with Philippine church partners, the 218th General Assembly (2008):

1. Calls upon the members and congregations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to become more aware of the suffering and injustice—including murder, abduction, torture, and other gross human rights violations—endured by the leaders of churches and other civil society groups at the hands of elements of the Philippine military, and to pray faithfully for the safety, wisdom, and courage of the leadership of the Philippine churches and other civil society groups as they face state violence and oppression.
2. Calls upon the appropriate agencies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to encourage presbytery partnerships, joint projects, and immersion experiences in the Philippines, in cooperation with the United Church of Christ of the Philippines, providing copies of this resolution (coordinated with the resolution on human rights in Colombia and others), and requesting participants to provide updates upon returning regarding the violence and oppression aimed at church leaders and other civil society groups.
3. Directs the appropriate agencies within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to advocate that the United States Congress and the Department of State reduce U.S. funding of the Philippine military and to condition all future aid on: (a) concrete signs that the human rights of unarmed citizens and groups within civil society are respected by all levels of government, including the Philippine military; and (b) evidence that those elements of the Philippine military that are implicated in murder, abduction, torture, and other gross human rights violations are held accountable by the government.

4. Calls upon the members and churches of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to help provide, through special offerings, for the material needs of church leaders and their families who suffer because of murder, abduction, torture, and other gross human rights violations, channeling such aid through the appropriate offices of the United Church of Christ of the Philippines.

5. Directs the appropriate agencies within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to advocate with committees and delegates of the United Nations to review, continually and diligently, through the proper agencies of the United Nations Human Rights Commission, the improvement or decline of respect for human rights by all branches of the Philippine government.

6. Directs the Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to write the president of the Philippines about these concerns, urging her to use her authority as commander-in-chief of the armed forces of the Philippines to stop the abuse of human rights by elements of the Philippine military and encouraging her to give greater energy and resources to ensure that all branches of the government honor human rights in every sector of Philippine society.

*(Item 11-31. This action derived from a Commissioners' Resolution.)*

### **On Support for the Presbyterian Church in Zimbabwe**

The 218th General Assembly (2008) of the PC(USA):

1. Calls upon the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the African Union] heads of state and governments to:

a. establish concrete measures for addressing the political, economic, and humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe;

b. vigorously advocate for free and fair elections in Zimbabwe;

c. ensure that the will of the Zimbabwean people is respected.

2. Urges the president and Congress of the United States to increase humanitarian aid to Zimbabwe and continue support for the Zimbabwean people via legislation, and to condemn the human rights abuses that have occurred in Zimbabwe.

3. Supports the work of individual congregations, church governing bodies, and ecumenical groups within Zimbabwe as well as the Presbytery of Zimbabwe and The Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa.

4. Calls upon the members of the World Council of Churches and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches to call to awareness the situation in Zimbabwe and to establish a Day of Prayer for the people of Zimbabwe.

5. Directs the office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian United Nations Office to communicate the concerns, prayers, and the work of the Presbyterian Church (USA) for justice in Zimbabwe to the United Nations.

*(Item 11-15. This action derived from an overture from the Presbytery of Denver; approved as amended, with comments: "Commend the South African dock workers for having the courage to refuse to unload a shipment of arms from China for Zimbabwe. Commend the various religious and secular organizations working to restore peace and order in many countries in Africa and around the world.)*

***...Cooperation and dialogue for peace and environmental justice  
among the world's religions***

**On Calling for Tolerance and Peaceful Relations Between  
the Christian and Muslim Communities**

The 218th General Assembly (2008):

1. Commends to the church for study the actions of previous General Assemblies calling for tolerance, mutual respect, and peaceful relations between the Christian and Muslim communities.

2. States that *though we hold differing understandings of how God has been revealed to humankind, the PC(USA) affirms* that, as children of this loving God, we share the commandments of love for God and neighbor <sup>1</sup> [and] the requirement to care for the poor.

3. [Resolves to] build on this understanding by calling for further dialogue among Jews, Christians, and Muslims, viewing each other as equals, and learning from one another to:

- promote peace, resolve conflict
- ensure human rights, prevent discrimination
- develop dialogue, emphasize commonality
- recognize differences, celebrate diversity
- advocate justice, oppose bias.

4. Commends the First Presbyterian Church of Rockaway [New Jersey] and other Presbyterian congregations that have initiated dialogue with Muslim and Jewish communities, and to encourage other congregations to initiate three-way dialogues among Jews, Christians, and Muslims consistent with the Presbyterian Principles for Interfaith Dialogue.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Christianity—Matthew 22:37, Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind," and Mark 12:3 and Luke 10:27. Islam —Quran: 60:7, It may be that God will grant love (and friendship) between you and those whom ye (now) hold as enemies. For God has power (over all things); And God is Oft-Forgiving and Most Merciful. Judaism — Deuteronomy 6:5, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength."

<sup>2</sup> Includes a meeting with the American Joint Multi-faith Association/People of Peace and Justice on July 9, 2005, and the Boonton Mosque featuring Elder Rick Ufford-Chase, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

- To encourage congregations of these faiths to celebrate religious holidays together, setting aside days of worship during which there can be congregational suppers, and dialogue groups.<sup>4</sup>
- To encourage sustained activities that will promote understanding, respect, and good will, using worship resources and promotional materials prepared by the Offices of Interfaith Relations and Theology and Worship, the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, and other General Assembly Council (GAC) and Office of the General Assembly (OGA) offices as appropriate.

5. Commissions a study on Islam and Christian-Muslim relations that would have the same scope and authority as the 1987 study on Christian-Jewish relations, to be carried out by the Interfaith Relations and Theology and Worship Offices of the General Assembly Council.

6. Calls for identification of violations of the civil rights of Christians, Jews, and Muslims in the United States and other areas of the world, along with other incidents of violation of religious freedoms, as part of the regular human rights report to the General Assembly.<sup>3</sup>

*(Item 07-01. This action derived from an overture from the Presbytery of Newton; approved as amended.)*

### **On Response to an Invitation to Interfaith Dialogue**

The 218th General Assembly (2008) supports *A Common Word Between Us and You*, an invitation to dialogue and cooperation from 138 Muslim clerics, and commends this document to our congregations, governing bodies, and seminaries for study and consideration as a primary source for engaging in substantive interfaith dialogue with the goal of greater understanding and cooperation among members of the Abrahamic faith traditions as the pathway to a new era of global peace and justice.

*(Item 07-02. This action derived from an overture from the Presbytery of Baltimore; approved as amended.)*

### **On Peaceful Relations Between Christian and Muslim Communities**

The 218th General Assembly (2008):

1. Affirms the PC(USA)'s commitment to and call for understanding, mutual respect, and peaceful relations between the Christian and Muslim communities.
2. Instructs the Office of Theology & Worship and the Office of Interfaith Relations to undertake a study of current and evolving Presbyterian theological understanding of our

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<sup>3</sup> The 214th General Assembly (2002) approved Item 14-03, Ecumenical Partnership: Human Rights and Religious Freedom Abroad, which encouraged congregations and presbyteries to use the "Checklist for PC(USA) Entities Confronted with Reports of Religious Freedom Violations" (*Minutes*, 2002, Part I, p. 668).

relationship with our Muslim sisters and brothers. We strongly urge that such a study be done in a context of relationships and dialogue.

3. [Resolves to] work to improve good relations between Presbyterians and Muslims at the level of national and international dialogue in order to promote peace, enhance mutual understanding, counteract bias and discrimination, recognize commonality, and celebrate diversity.
4. [Resolves to] encourage and provide resources to presbyteries and local congregations to improve good relations and mutual understanding between Presbyterians and Muslims at the local level for the same reasons. Practices might include participation in sacred and holy observances in each other's traditions, shared meals, dialogue groups, and joint community projects, among others.
5. Encourages PC(USA) governing bodies at all levels to advocate for human rights and civil rights protections for Muslims; identify areas where the civil rights of Muslims may be violated and work to counteract such violation. Communicate Presbyterian solidarity and support for those who are targeted or whose rights are violated.

*(Item 07-07. The action derived from an overture from the Presbytery of Chicago.)*

## JUSTICE IN THE CHURCH

***We – individual Christians and churches – commit ourselves to a culture of peace and freedom that embraces nonviolence, 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.***

### **Resolution to Study the Belhar Confession for Inclusion in the Confessional Documents of the Presbyterian Church (USA)**

The 218th General Assembly (2008):

1. Directs the Moderators of the 216th, 217th, and 218th General Assemblies (2004, 2006, and 2008)—in consultation with the Stated Clerk, the Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns (ACREC), the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, and the Office of Theology and Worship—to initiate the process described in G-18.0201b by appointing a committee, separate from any committee assigned to the Heidelberg Catechism, to consider amending the confessional documents of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to include the Belhar Confession in *The Book of Confessions* and to report to the 219th General Assembly (2010).

2. Urges all Presbyterians in congregations, middle governing bodies, and other entities related to the PC(USA) to engage in study, prayer, reflection, and discernment, of the Belhar Confession and the Report of the Task Force to Study Reparations, utilizing the following resources:

- *A Study Guide of The Belhar Confession and Its Accompanying Letter*, Eunice T. McGarrahan. Published by the Office of Theology and Worship, General Assembly Council, PC(USA), 2008. Available online at: <http://www.pcusa.org/theologyandworship/confession.htm>
- *Report of the Task Force on Reparations* (216th General Assembly (2004)). *Minutes*, 2004, Part I, pp. 701–20. This report includes the full text of the Belhar Confession. Available online at <http://www.pcusa.org/reparations/>
- *A Study Guide for the Report of the Task Force on Reparations*, Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, 2008. Available online at <http://www.pcusa.org/peacemaking/>

### **World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) Gender, Leadership and Power Consultation**

The 218th General Assembly (2008):

1. Receives the WARC report from the Gender Leadership and Power Consultation.
2. Directs the General Assembly Council (GAC) [to] provide leadership and participation in the North American region with our partner WARC communions and include a strategy for a study process for gender, leadership, and power in the PC(USA).
3. Recommends [that] the GAC ministry areas include this work in the 2009-2010 work plans.
4. Requests the General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical Relations (GACER) to monitor this process and report its findings to the 219th General Assembly (2010).

*(Item 07-12. This action derived from a recommendation from the Committee on Ecumenical Relations.)*

See also “God’s Work in Women’s Hands: Pay Equity and Just Compensation” (on p. #), which deals at length with issues of pay equity and just compensation for women within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

### **Hearing and Singing New Songs to God: Shunning Old Discords and Sharing New Harmonies**

Hearing and singing new songs to God, calling the church to new directions and new ways of being in ministry, and affirming the denomination’s ongoing efforts “to *unmask idolatries in Church and culture, to bear the voices of peoples long silenced, and to work with others for justice, freedom,*

*and peace*” (A Brief Statement of Faith, *The Book of Confessions*, 10:4, lines 69-71), the 218th General Assembly (2008):

1. Declares 2009 to 2019 a “Decade of Hearing and Singing New Songs to God” in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), which will call for transformation of the church, focusing on the intersections of gender, race, and class, and will include the following emphases:
  - a. developing an understanding of and ability to use a “gender lens,” that is, to view issues, institutions, and actions through the lens of gender-specific needs and realities;
  - b. recognizing the intersectionality of gender and race, along with other factors such as ethnicity and class that contribute to unique or particular experiences of oppression and/or privilege;
  - c. seeking inclusivity with equity: moving beyond tokenism in the participation of women of color of all ages to valuing and embracing the gifts they bring to the life of the whole church;
  - d. adopting an understanding of shared power as a fundamental element of community; and
  - e. implementing mechanisms of accountability that hold the systems of power in the church accountable to the whole church, particularly those parts of the church that have been historically silenced or invisible.
2. Requests the Moderator, the Stated Clerk, and the Executive Director of the General Assembly Council to communicate with congregations, presbyteries and synods, seminaries, campus ministries, and conference centers asking them to recognize the Decade of Hearing and Singing New Songs to God and incorporate it in worship, conferences, training events, and other activities.
3. Directs the Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns (ACREC) and the Advocacy Committee for Women’s Concerns (ACWC) to create a permanent Joint Working Group on Women of Color in the Church, to be made up of two members of ACREC and two members of ACWC, appointed by the leadership of each committee.
  - a. In addition to the ACWC and ACREC members, the working group may appoint two to four members at-large, one of whom should be a young woman of color between the ages of 18-35, to provide representation and expertise, as needed.
  - b. The ACWC and ACREC shall meet jointly at least once a year, at which time an extra meeting day will be provided for the joint working group.
  - c. The joint working group shall monitor the church’s response to issues and concerns raised in the initial Women of Color Consultation, advise ACREC and ACWC on new and emerging issues impacting women of color, and consult with the General Assembly Council in planning for future consultations.

4. Directs the General Assembly Council, in consultation with Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns and the Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns, to plan a Women of Color Consultation that focuses on the full participation and leadership/decision-making roles of women of color of all ages in synods and presbyteries. Plans for the next consultation shall be reported to the 219th General Assembly (2010), for an event to be held no later than 2011, and from which a report and recommendations shall be submitted to the 220th General Assembly (2012).

5. Urges the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly and the General Assembly Council elected to utilize the tools of cultural proficiency in all of their activities to deepen and enhance their work together across differences.

6. Requests the Office of the General Assembly and the General Assembly Council, working in partnership to resource and equip presbyteries and synods, utilizing the tools of cultural proficiency, to work for equitable participation of women of color in all aspects of the life and ministry of presbyteries and synods.

7. Urges all entities in the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) and the General Assembly Council (GAC) to be mindful of the critical importance of utilizing culturally proficient communication tools and strategies and to be intentional in working to communicate with the whole church to convey the vision of being diverse and inclusive with equity. Request Communications and Funds Development, in partnership with the Cultural Proficiency office, to equip OGA and GAC staff with culturally proficient communication tools.

8. Directs the Office of the General Assembly, the General Assembly Council, the Board of Pensions, the Presbyterian Foundation, the Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program, Inc., and the Presbyterian Publishing Corporation to collect, organize, and report data for all research in the church (such as comparative statistics, Presbyterian Panel, data gathered by the Vocation's office on inquirers, candidates, and clergy, the Stated Clerk's annual statistical report, etc.) in a disaggregated form by race, ethnicity, gender, and age, so that data on women of color and young adult women of color may be identified separately for analysis, where possible and as permissible by law.

9. Directs the General Assembly Council to develop a resource for use by congregations, presbyteries, synods, and General Assembly that will provide tools to conduct a gender equity audit that includes age, race, and ethnicity, that enables entities within the church to gather quantifiable data on women and persons of color's presence, participation, and influence in decision-making processes.

10. Directs the General Assembly Council, in consultation with Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns and Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns, to expand on the basic antiracism training to include modules on the intersectionality of race, gender, and class, and provide focused training on internalized oppression and privilege, with a timeline as follows:

a. the intersections of race, gender and class by 2010;

- b. internalized oppression (race & gender) by 2012;
- c. white privilege and male privilege by 2014.

11. Reaffirm the General Assembly policy commitments to race and gender justice, including the church's commitments to ensure racial ethnic and women's representation in decision-making bodies. Urge all nominating committees, committees on representation, and policy-making bodies to be mindful of the intersections of race, gender, and class. At the General Assembly level,

- a. remind and reaffirm the General Assembly Nominating Committee, the General Assembly Council Nominating Committee, and the committees on representation as they do their work, where they are guided by specific representation criteria to consider gender balance when they are fulfilling guidelines for racial ethnic representation and to include racial ethnic representation when fulfilling guidelines for women's representation;
- b. remind and reaffirm the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy to be mindful of the intersections of gender, race, and class in the appointment of its resolution teams, task forces, consultants, etc., and in the development of policy.

12. Encourage member-based organizations, networks, associations, and caucuses within the church to dismantle racism, sexism, classism, and ageism at all levels of the church, including within their own organizations. These organizations are encouraged to utilize the antiracism, cultural proficiency, and other leadership training resources developed by the Office of the General Assembly and the General Assembly Council to equip their members to be advocates of transformation within Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) structures (see Appendix B: Resources). They are encouraged to work in partnership with others in this endeavor.

13. Encourage the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), as it participates with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in its development of a global study process on gender, leadership, and power, to include attention to the intersections of gender, race, and class in the U. S. context.

(Item 09-13. This action originated as a recommendation from the Women of Color Consultation Task Force.)

### **On Deleting G-6.01 and Substituting a New Paragraph In Its Place....**

The 218th General Assembly (2008):

- 1. Directs the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:
  - a. Strike the current text of G-6.0106b and insert new text to read as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

~~“b. Those who are called to office in the church are to lead a life in obedience to Scripture and in conformity to the historic confessional standards of the church. Among these standards is the requirement to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman (W-4.9001), or chastity in singleness. Persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which the confessions call sin shall not be ordained and/or installed as deacons, elders, or ministers of the Word and Sacrament. Those who are called to ordained service in the church, by their assent to the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.4003), pledge themselves to live lives obedient to Jesus Christ the Head of the Church, striving to follow where he leads through the witness of the Scriptures, and to understand the Scriptures through the instruction of the Confessions. In so doing, they declare their fidelity to the standards of the Church. Each governing body charged with examination for ordination and/or installation (G-14.0240 and G-14.0450) establishes the candidate’s sincere efforts to adhere to these standards.~~

b. Amend G-14.0240 as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

#### “Preparation and Examination for Office

“When persons have been elected to the office of elder or deacon, the session shall confer with them as to their willingness to undertake the office. The session shall provide for a period of study and preparation, after which the session shall examine the officers-elect as to their personal faith; knowledge of the doctrine, government, and discipline contained in the Constitution of the church; ~~and~~ the duties of the office; *and readiness to assent to the constitutional questions for ordination and installation.* If the examination is approved, the session shall appoint a day for the service of ordination and installation (see W-4.4000). If the examination is not approved for one or more elected officers, the session shall report its action to the congregation’s nominating committee, which shall bring nomination(s) to a meeting of the congregation for any office(s) not filled.”

c. Amend G-14.0450 by inserting a new paragraph “b.” and by re-lettering current paragraphs “b.” through “d.” as “c.” through “f.” The text shall read as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

#### “Final Assessment of Readiness to Begin Ordained Ministry

“In the final year of theological education or when a candidate has satisfied all of the requirements of this section, and before the candidate has received a call, the committee on preparation for ministry of the candidate’s presbytery shall conduct a final assessment of the candidate’s readiness to begin ordained ministry. A summary of this assessment shall be reported to the presbytery and shall be transmitted to a calling presbytery when requested. The committee on preparation for ministry shall report to the presbytery when it has certified a candidate ready for examination for ordination, pending a call. This consultation shall focus on the outcomes of inquiry and candidacy and shall include each of the following requirements of certification:

“a. demonstration of readiness to begin ministry of the Word and Sacrament as required to fulfill the candidacy phase of preparation;

*“b. demonstration of readiness to assent to the constitutional questions for ordination and installation;*

*“b. c. presentation of a transcript showing satisfactory grades at a regionally accredited college or university, together with a diploma;*

*“e. d. presentation of a transcript from a theological institution accredited by the Association of Theological Schools acceptable to the presbytery, the transcript showing satisfactory grades, and presentation of a plan to complete the theological degree including Hebrew and Greek and exegesis of the Old and New Testaments using Hebrew and Greek texts;*

*“d. e. presentation of satisfactory grades together with the examination papers in the five areas covered by the Presbyteries’ Cooperative Committee on Examinations for Candidates.”*

2. Provide the following authoritative interpretation:

Interpretive statements concerning ordained service of homosexual church members by the 190th General Assembly (1978) of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, and the 119th General Assembly (1979) of the Presbyterian Church in the United States and all subsequent affirmations thereof, have no further force or effect.

*(Item 05-09. This action derived from an overture from the Presbytery of Boston. Approved with the following comment: “Presbyteries are strongly encouraged to consider this [action] using a process of listening and discernment.”)*

### **On Adopting an Authoritative Interpretation to Ensure Proper Application of Ordination Standards**

The 218th General Assembly (2008) approves the following authoritative interpretation of G-6.0108 of the *Book of Order*:

“The 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2008) affirms the authoritative interpretation of G-6.0108 approved by the 217th General Assembly (2006). Further, the 218th General Assembly (2008), pursuant to G-13.0112, interprets the requirements of G-6.0108 to apply equally to all ordination standards of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Section G-6.0108 requires examining bodies to give prayerful and careful consideration, on an individual, case-by-case basis, to any departure from an ordination standard in matters of belief or practice that a candidate may declare during examination. However, the examining body is not required to accept a departure from standards, and cannot excuse a candidate’s inability to perform the constitutional functions unique to his or her office (such as administration of the sacraments).”

*(Item 05-12. This action derived from an overture from John Knox Presbytery; approved as amended.)*

### **On Correcting Translation Problems of the Heidelberg Catechism**

The 218th General Assembly (2008) [resolves] to correct translation problems in five responses of the Heidelberg Catechism as found in *The Book of Confessions* and to add the original Scripture texts of the German Heidelberg Catechism. The following changes are proposed:

1. Amend the answer to 4.019 as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“A. From the holy gospel, which God himself revealed in the beginning in the Garden of Eden, afterward proclaimed through the holy patriarchs and prophets and foreshadowed through the sacrifices and other ~~rites of the Old Covenant~~ *ceremonies of the law*, and, finally, fulfilled through his own well-beloved Son.”

2. Amend the answer to 4.033 as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“A. Because Christ alone is God’s ~~own eternal Son~~ *natural son*, whereas we are ~~accepted~~ *adopted* for his sake as children of God by grace.”

3. Amend the answer to 4.055 as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“A. First, that believers one and all, as partakers of the Lord Christ, and all his treasures and gifts, ~~shall~~ share in one fellowship. Second, that each one ought to know that he is obliged to use his gifts ~~freely~~ *willingly* and with joy for the benefit and welfare of other members.”

4. Amend the answer to 4.074 as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“A. Yes, because they, as well as their parents, are included in the covenant and belong to the people of God. Since both redemption from sin through the blood of Christ and the gift of faith from the Holy Spirit are promised to these children no less than to their parents, infants are also by baptism, as a sign of the covenant, to be incorporated into the Christian church and distinguished from the children of unbelievers. This was done in the Old ~~Covenant~~ *Testament* by circumcision. In the New ~~Covenant~~ *Testament* baptism has been instituted to take its place.”

5. Amend the answer to 4.087 as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“A. ~~Certainly not! Scripture says, “Surely you know that the unjust will never come into possession of the kingdom of God. Make no mistake: no fornicator or idolater, none who are guilty either of adultery or of homosexual perversion, no thieves or grabbers or drunkards or slanderers or swindlers, will possess the kingdom of God.”<sup>2</sup> Certainly not; for as Scripture says no unchaste person, idolater, adulterer, thief, greedy person, drunkard, slanderer, robber, or anyone like that shall inherit the kingdom of god.~~”

*(Item 13-06. This action derived from an overture from the Presbytery of Newark.)*

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**On Creating a Presbyterian Office for the Prevention and Healing  
of Minister of Word and Sacrament Misconduct and Abuse**

The 218th General Assembly (2008) approved the following resolution:

Alternate Joint Resolution  
Between the Office of the General Assembly;  
the General Assembly Council; the Overture Advocates  
of the Presbyteries of San Francisco, Geneva, and San Jose;  
and the Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns

While the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) and the General Assembly Council (GAC) provide a combination of staff and resources to assist in prevention of sexual misconduct and to support middle governing bodies and local churches when a minister of the Word and Sacrament controlled or employed by them is accused of sexual misconduct, this approach may have been perceived to be reactive rather than responsive, and could be more proactive. The approach should be expanded and strengthened to ensure appropriate resources are easily accessible to middle governing bodies and local particular churches. At the same time, survivors must receive information to enable them to access pastoral care and access advocacy assistance regardless of whether the perpetrator is a minister of the Word and Sacrament, member, elder, deacon, commissioned lay pastor, volunteer, or nonordained staff doing ministry, including Christian educators and youth leaders of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

To strengthen and improve resourcing for middle governing bodies and local particular churches, the OGA/GAC will:

1. Better coordinate and develop resources by forming a joint OGA/GAC staff advisory team that will meet regularly to review existing resources and recommend development of additional resources; review the hotline response to ensure it includes appropriate pastoral and advocacy elements; review and recommend Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) "best practices" to be included in a revised Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Sexual Misconduct Policy and Guidelines to be recommended as guidelines to middle governing bodies and local churches, which will be sent as a report to the 219th General Assembly (2010); and to review the training resources for needed updates and enhancements.
2. Train three to four people to answer the hotline in the absence of the Sexual Misconduct Ombudsperson.
3. Survey, through the Office of Middle Governing Body Relations, to determine what resources presbyteries need for the prevention of and response to incidents of sexual misconduct and, if needed, to develop and distribute at reasonable cost to middle governing

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bodies and local particular churches, a training on the topic of preventing and responding to sexual misconduct by ministers of the Word and Sacrament, member, elder, deacon, commissioned lay pastor, volunteer, or non-ordained staff doing ministry, including Christian educators and youth leaders. This training could be available on DVD and available for order on the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Website at reasonable cost. The advisory staff team could investigate online training and train-the-trainer educational programs to be provided through third party vendors at a reasonable fee per participant.

4. Place resources currently available on the PC(USA) website in one easily accessible area of the website, and develop and distribute a brochure to promote the available resources on the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) website to middle governing bodies and local churches and available opportunities for training.

5. Increase middle governing body and local particular church awareness of the availability of these resources through MGB Connect, OGA and GAC websites, by sending online communications.

*(Item 03-20. This action derived from an overture that originated in the Presbytery of San Francisco.)*

### **On Urging the Board of Pension to Expand the Definition of Medical Necessity to Include Habilitative Services for Children with Congenital Development Disabilities**

The 218th General Assembly (2008):

1. Urges the Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to expand the current definition of Medical Necessity as found in Article XIII, Section 13.1 (k) of the benefits plan to include habilitative services such as occupational therapy, speech therapy, and physical therapy, which seek to promote healthy growth and improve function for children with congenital developmental disabilities such as Down's syndrome and autism and report back to the 219th General Assembly (2010).

2. Directs the PC(USA) office of Social Welfare Organizations, which encompasses the disability portfolio, Presbyterians for Disability Concerns, and the PC(USA) Disability Consultants to be in consultation with the Board of Pensions throughout this review.

*(Item 15-01. This action derived from an overture from the Presbytery of Central Nebraska.)*

### **On Directing PC(USA) Entities to Reflect Balance in Advocating Both Sides of the Abortion Issue**

The 218th General Assembly (2008) directs the appropriate PC(USA) entities to redevelop congregational resource materials on the subject of reproductive options to more adequately reflect the full spectrum of biblical, theological, and pastoral counsel, while remaining consistent with the policy of the 1992 report of the Special Committee on Problem

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Pregnancies and Abortion and the 2006 policy on Late-Term Pregnancies and Abortion. The General Assembly Council will report back to the 219th General Assembly (2010).

*(Item 10-03. This action derived from an overture from the Presbytery of Pittsburgh.)*

### **On Producing Adolescent Human Development Resources**

The 218th General Assembly (2008) directs the General Assembly Council to produce adolescent human development resources based upon Scripture and the Reformed theological tradition. These resources would explore all facets of adolescent development including human sexuality.

*(Item 12-08. This action derived from an overture from the Presbytery of Grace; approved with a comment from the Committee on Church Growth and Christian Education, which read in part: "... We set aside our individual desires to 'win' and to further our own agendas; [we] put our faith in God and send this overture on without trying to advocate one position or another, trusting not only God, but our fellow Presbyterians to do what is right not only for our children but for our denomination....")*