

WITNESS IN WASHINGTON WEEKLY

The Washington Office of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

May 28, 2009

This week's messages are-

- Urge Congress to Improve Foreign Aid Efforts
- Urge Congress to increase funds for clean drinking water and adequate sanitation
- Tell Obama You Support Strong U.S. Action on Settlements and Gaza
- Luke 10:25-37 - The Parable of the Good Samaritan

Urge Congress to Improve Foreign Aid Efforts

Without an overarching strategy for global development, U.S. aid is often disbursed with little coordination and a lack of strategic direction. Adding to this problem is the number of organizations currently involved: 12 federal departments, 25 agencies and more than 60 government offices oversee U.S. foreign aid.

The Initiating Foreign Assistance Reform Act (H.R. 2139), introduced by Rep. Howard Berman (CA), calls on the president to create a global development strategy to make the money the U.S. spends on foreign aid as effective as possible. Please urge your member to co-sponsor this legislation, which will help improve U.S. efforts to reduce global poverty and prevent deadly conflict.

Click <http://capwiz.com/pcusa/issues/alert/?alertid=13425481&type=CO> to send a message to your Representative.

Background Information

There is a vital need to reform the U.S. foreign-assistance system in order to better prioritize, and gain leverage in, the fight against global poverty and deadly disease. This is particularly important at a time when the global financial crisis is pushing tens of millions of new people around the world below the deadly poverty line, and tight budgets in the United States may mean that critical global-health programs are forced to operate with fewer resources than previously planned. And remember, foreign aid is already less than one percent of the federal budget. On April 28, the chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Rep. Howard Berman (D-CA), along with Rep. Mark Kirk (R-IL), introduced a **bipartisan bill that begins the foreign-aid reform process in earnest.**

WHAT DOES THE BILL DO?

Called the "Initiating Foreign Assistance Reform Act" (H.R. 2139), the bill directs President Obama to develop and implement a comprehensive national strategy to promote global-economic development and fight deadly poverty around the world. Such a strategy is a critical precursor to congressional efforts - expected to begin later this year - to redesign and update our-nation's foreign-aid system for the 21st Century, elevating economic development alongside defense and diplomacy in our nation's foreign policy, and making the system more accountable to American taxpayers and more efficient in its use of resources.

Specifically, the bill does four things:

1. **Streamline:** Requires the President to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to define and streamline the roles of each department and agency engaged in U.S. global-development efforts and prioritize the fight against deadly poverty;
2. **Monitor:** Requires the President to develop and implement a rigorous system to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of our nation's foreign-aid programs;
3. **Report:** Requires the U.S. government to make available detailed country-by-country information on all aspects of the foreign-aid system, and to make this information easily accessible both to American taxpayers as well as recipients of U.S. foreign aid; and
4. **Repeal:** Repeals a few outdated provisions of the 1961 foreign-assistance law that are technical in nature and no longer relevant.

Click <http://capwiz.com/pcusa/issues/alert/?alertid=13425481&type=CO> to contact your member of Congress.

General Assembly Guidance:

The 208th General Assembly (1996):

- calls upon the president and the Congress to make support for national sustainable development strategies the primary mission of the USAID. Such strategies should focus especially on programs aimed directly at conserving natural resources and the environment and programs to meet basic human needs, generate income, and assist family planning.
- urges USAID, the multilateral assistance agencies, and all agents of development assistance to give higher priority to partnership relationships with local communities.
- calls upon the president and the Congress to increase substantially overall United States financial and technical support for just and sustainable human development. A doubling of funding would be appropriate if prospects are good that it can be well spent. Special emphasis should be given to countries that

maximize poverty reduction, minimize military expenditures, and protect the environment, and to programs that have favorable prospects for continuing benefits based upon community-based energies and follow-through after funding is terminated.

- urges that United States assistance , trade, and debt policies encourage policies of southern governments to provide the framework, infrastructure, and basic services within which democratic, participatory, relatively self-reliant communities may thrive.
- urges that the significant roles of NGOs in community-based sustainable development be recognized, encouraged, and supported by governments, churches, foundations, other funding agencies, and individual donors.

Urge Congress to increase funds for clean drinking water and adequate sanitation Support \$500 million in 2010 appropriations legislation.

ACTION: Contact your Senators and Representative and urge them to appropriate \$500 million in FY 2010 for clean drinking water and adequate sanitation internationally. This funding for continuing implementation of the *Water for the Poor Act* should be directed to long-term, sustainable drinking water and sanitation in the countries that need it the most. This increase should be part of an overall increase in U.S. development assistance for poverty alleviation world-wide.

Click <http://capwiz.com/pcusa/issues/alert/?alertid=13425436&type=CO> to send a message to your Senators and Congressman.

BACKGROUND

The need for adequate drinking water and sanitation is great. Eighty percent of sickness in the developing world, and the deaths of 4,500 children daily, trace back to contaminated water and inadequate sanitation. Clean water is key to every other aspect of development -- from children's education to economic growth and environmental sustainability. But nearly 1 billion people still lack access to clean water and 2.5 billion people are without basic sanitation.

The FY08 and FY09 foreign operations appropriations bills included \$300 million each year to implement the *Water for the Poor Act* (WFTPA), the framework for drinking water- and sanitation-related foreign aid. The beneficial impact of these first years of funding for the WFTPA is already allowing the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to hire new technical staff with drinking water & sanitation expertise, the leveraging of increased host government investment, increased matching funds available to non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and a range of tested and pilot approaches to increase water and sanitation coverage in individual host countries. FY 2010's appropriations to \$500 million would allow for a much-

needed scaling up of USAID/State actions on behalf of safe, affordable and sustainable supplies of water and sanitation.

This funding commitment will increase coverage of people in high priority countries and advance progress toward the Congressional goal - expressed in the *Water for the Poor Act* -- of reducing by half the proportion of people without clean drinking water by 2015.

FAITH REFLECTION

Few things are as basic as water. In the Christian Scriptures, creation begins with the Spirit of God "brooding over the face of the waters." The Bible affirms water as the cradle of life, an expression of God's grace in perpetuity for the whole of creation (Gen 2:5ff). It is a basic condition for all life on Earth and is to be preserved and shared for the benefit of all creatures and the wider creation.

Click <http://capwiz.com/pcusa/issues/alert/?alertid=13425436&type=CO> to send a message now!

General Assembly Guidance:

In 1990, the 202nd General Assembly received and approved the major study by the Committee on Social Witness Policy's Eco-Justice Task Force entitled *Restoring Creation For Ecology and Justice*. The report was divided into four sections with information or background sections first, followed by recommendations. The sections are: "Creation's Cry: The Crisis of Ecology and Justice; "Response to an Endangered Planet;" "Social Policies to Preserve the Environment;" "The Church's Life and Program." Recommendations included: education to make the 1990's the "turn around decade" in the use of the environment, ". . . [E] Earth-keeping today means insisting on sustainability -- the ongoing capacity of natural and social systems to thrive together -- which requires human beings to practice wise, humble, responsible stewardship Justice today requires participation, the including of all members of the human family in obtaining and enjoying the Creator's gifts for sustenance Justice also means sufficiency, a standard upholding the claim of all to have enough -- to be met through equitable sharing and organized efforts to achieve that end . . ." (PC(USA), 1990 p. 647); basic policies in support of sustainable agriculture, water quality, wildlife and wildlands, solid waste reduction and management, hazardous waste, global warming and ozone depletion, and cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme.

Tell Obama You Support Strong U.S. Action on Settlements and Gaza

In a much anticipated meeting at the White House, President Barack Obama and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met for the first time and discussed U.S. and Israeli positions on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and Iran.

The President's strong affirmation of the two-state solution and his demand that all parties - Israel, the Palestinians and the Arab States - take actions in pursuit of peace, including his focus on the need for settlements to stop and for progress to be made on the Gaza humanitarian situation are welcome steps forward. On the issue of how to sequence pursuit of Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking and addressing Iran's nuclear capacity, the President's affirmation that the U.S. has to move "aggressively on both fronts" and wants Iran to be "a full-fledged member of the international community." This is also a welcome step.

Click <http://capwiz.com/pcusa/issues/alert/?alertid=13425396&type=PR> to send an email to President Obama. Let him know that American Christians support robust U.S. diplomacy to establish a viable Palestinian state alongside Israel and foster a more peaceful and secure Middle East.

President Obama strongly affirmed his previous statements that it is in the interest of all parties, "to achieve a two-state solution" and stressed that "all the parties involved have to take seriously obligations that they previously agreed to," including in the road map and at Annapolis.

Obama pressed Netanyahu on the difficult steps Israel must take, stating unequivocally that "settlements have to be stopped in order for us to move forward." His statement came as construction is underway for a new settlement called Maskiyot in the Palestinian West Bank.

Obama addressed the humanitarian situation in Gaza emphasizing that while rocket attacks on Israel are unacceptable, the fact that the people of Gaza "have no hope...can't even get clean water" and the "border closures are so tight that it is impossible for reconstruction and humanitarian efforts to take place" is not compatible with moving forward on peace. The President also said that Palestinians must do more to provide Israel with security assurance and that Arab states have to be "bolder in seeking potential normalization with Israel."

Let President Obama know that you welcome his attention to the issue of settlements and the Gaza humanitarian situation and that you support vigorous diplomacy with Israel, the Palestinians and the Arab States to achieve a comprehensive peace.

During the press conference, Netanyahu stated his desire to "to start peace negotiations with the Palestinians immediately" with the goal of ending the conflict, but failed to utter the words two-state solution or Palestinian state. He also set up various conditions for successful negotiations, including once again the demand that Palestinians "recognize Israel as a Jewish state."

President Obama is set to meet with Palestinian President Abbas and Egyptian President Mubarak next week, followed by a major speech in Cairo on June 4. He needs to hear that American Christians welcome strong U.S. leadership on behalf of Middle East peace.

Click <http://capwiz.com/pcusa/issues/alert/?alertid=13425396&type=PR> to send a message to the President.

General Assembly Guidance:

The 2003 Assembly reaffirmed the actions of previous General Assemblies (cf., in 1998, 1997, 1996, 1995, 1992, 1991, 1990 several resolutions, 1988, 1987, 1986, and earlier to 1967) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and communications by the Stated Clerk based on those actions (cf., most recently: April 5, 2002; March 8 and 11, 2002; October 14, 2000, etc.):

1. Supporting the resolutions of the United Nations, affirming the right of Israel to exist within secure borders, and the right of the Palestinians to self-determination, including the establishment of their own sovereign state and the right of return of Palestinian refugees.
2. Calling on the Israelis and Palestinians to cease their acts of violence against each other.
3. Urging the Israeli government to end its expansionist policies of confiscation of land and water resources and the building and enlarging of settlements, and of collective punishment of Palestinians, such as is exercised through administrative detentions, demolition of homes, mass house imprisonment ("curfews"), uprooting olive trees, setting up road blocks and checkpoints, and other forms of harassment and humiliation.
4. Calling on the Israeli government to end the occupation of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem.
5. Urging the United States government to intervene actively with the government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to broker a just, secure, and permanent peace.

Luke 10:25-37 - The Parable of the Good Samaritan

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher,' he said, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' He said to him, 'What is written in the law? What do you read there?' He answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.' And he said to him, 'You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.'

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?' Jesus replied, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, "Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend." Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?' He said, 'The one who showed him mercy.' Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'

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