

Presbyterian Women in the Presbytery of Arkansas Justice and Peace Issues

“So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.”

James 2:17

Presbyterian Women in the Presbytery of Arkansas are actively involved in working for justice and peace for all people. We affirm that all persons, as human beings, have inherent worth and dignity and those basic human rights should be equally available to every person regardless of race, religion, ethnic background, age or gender.

Justice and Peace issues being addressed by Presbyterian Women in the Presbytery of Arkansas include:

- ❖ Impact of war on women, children and their families
- ❖ Racism/Prejudice/Diversity
- ❖ HIV/AIDS pandemic disease – a global challenge: AIDS – 7 million agricultural workers have died from AIDS in the 25 worst affected African countries since 1985
- ❖ Children’s Defence Fund – ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start, and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood
- ❖ Child Prostitution and Child Pornography
- ❖ Domestic Violence – an intolerable pattern of abusive behaviors used to control others. It can occur in any relationship, regardless of age, income, race, education, ethnic background, personal ability, sexual orientation, marital status or social standing. When children are raised in a climate of abuse and neglect, family violence and/or chemical dependency, their futures hang in the balance.
- ❖ Use of inclusive language to deepen our understanding of God and one another – “Love One Another”
- ❖ Hunger – 852 million people around the world do not have enough to eat everyday – 1 in 5 is a child.
- ❖ Poverty – more than 1 billion people in developing countries live on \$1 a day or less
- ❖ Powerlessness – due to no access to credit, illiteracy, oppression, education, racism and gender discrimination
- ❖ Debt – some countries spend more on debt repayment than on nutrition, health and education combined. In many countries violence and militarism disrupt agriculture, uproot people, destroy infrastructures, increase debt, and drain precious resources from social programs
- ❖ Over Population tests the limits of fragile environments and further taxes impoverished nations’ abilities to meet nutritional, health and educational needs.
- ❖ Economic Globalization – has created opportunities for some (usually the wealthiest countries and companies) but caused poverty, unemployment and food insecurity for many, many others.
- ❖ Environmental Degradation – misused ecosystems: depleted soil and scarce fresh water contribute to hunger and spark conflicts that add to the problem
- ❖ Landmines – although the news no longer frequently reports on landmines, they are still there and still deadly.

PW are encouraged to educate themselves about worldwide hunger, violence and disease and to pray daily for:

- ❖ Peace and for an end to suffering
- ❖ The poor in all countries, including the United States, especially children living in poverty
- ❖ God's help for hungry people around the world and in the United States
- ❖ God's wisdom and strength for those who reach out with food, encouragement, support and advocacy
- ❖ God's guidance for legislators who pass laws, approve programs, and appropriate funds affecting hungry and sick people
- ❖ God's guidance for all who work for peace, so that fear of violence will no longer haunt inhabitants of war stricken countries
- ❖ God's blessing on all churches’ hunger ministries
- ❖ Understanding about AIDS and about what life is like for those living with HIV/AIDS in their lives, families and communities
- ❖ Adequate healthcare, education, housing, child care and protection from abuse and exploitation of children. National Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453) answered 24/365.
- ❖ Victims of domestic violence and abuse. National Domestic Violence Hotline 800-799-SAFE (1-800-799-7233); for those who are hearing impaired (800) 787-3224) answered 24/365.

*"And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice,
and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"*

Micah 6:8

Initiatives and Emphases

Theological Basis for Social Justice and Peacemaking

Presbyterian Women affirms that advocacy on issues of justice and peace is part of living out one's faith. Scripture verses as well as church documents and statements call Presbyterian Women to be involved in working toward justice and peace for all of God's people.

Highlight of Presbyterian Women's Involvement in Justice and Peacemaking

Presbyterian Women and its predecessor organizations have been involved in advocacy on many issues of justice and peace:

Ecumenicity/Social Justice Issues: Supported issues of social justice through National and World Council of Churches at their earliest dates. Church World Service support noted in 1940s.

Hunger: In 1969, PCUS hunger program formed. As an outgrowth of PW concerns for hunger, in May, 1975, the General Assembly voted to make hunger a priority for the church.

Peacemaking/Human Rights: The "Asian Encounter" Global Exchange in 1977 opened issues of peacemaking and human rights. In 1983, GA invited sessions to integrate peacemaking into the life of their congregations.

Racism/Prejudice/Divestments: "Race Relations Sunday" started in 1922. "Exchanges in Understanding" (1984) Global Exchange challenged us to search for racism within ourselves, as well as the issue of divestment in South Africa. In 1999 the Churchwide Coordinating Team of Presbyterian Women (CCT) declared itself an anti-racist community and continued work on the issue. The voting representatives to the 2000 Churchwide Business Meeting of Presbyterian Women unanimously approved a resolution declaring Presbyterian Women an antiracism organization and reaffirmed their commitment to strive to eradicate racism. The voting representatives acknowledged that "racism is imbedded in the very structure of our society and thus requires a very intentional effort to eradicate it" calling for organization-wide antiracism training. Working towards this end, a task group was created to critique the organization from a structural and programmatic perspective. The task force surveyed 600 members of PW, seeking feedback on how Presbyterian Women can become a more racially and culturally inclusive organization.

Child Prostitution/Child Pornography: The 1996 Global Exchange, "A Caring Journey" to southeast Asia and the United States of America brought home the terrible injustice done to a million-plus children who are abused through tourism and commercialized sexual abuses.

Domestic Violence: Women and Children: Ongoing education of the issues and occurrence of domestic violence, and support of advocacy, prevention and rehabilitation.

Several offices of the Presbyterian Church's General Assembly work on justice and peace issues:

Women's Ministries A ministry that supports and coordinates the various programs for women, including women's advocacy and young women's ministries

Presbyterian Health, Education and Welfare Association A community of ministries organized around 10 networks that provide programmatic, organizational and technical assistance to justice issues having to do with health and wellness

Presbyterian Hunger Program A ministry that works to alleviate hunger and eliminate its causes, responding with compassion and justice to poor and hungry people in local communities in the United States and internationally

Presbyterian Peacemaking Program A ministry that provides resources, events and programs to help the church grow in its witness and commitment to peacemaking

Presbyterian United Nations Office Part of the Presbyterian Peacemaking Office that advocates the concerns of the PC(USA) to the United Nations and also educates Presbyterians about how to put faith into action in the global arena

Presbyterian Washington Office The public policy information and advocacy office of the General Assembly that advocates and helps the church to advocate the social witness perspectives and policies of the General Assembly