



Presbyterian Mission
**Presbyterian
Peacemaking Program**



COMPANION GUIDE

Introduction to the COMPANION GUIDE

by Carl Horton, *Coordinator for Mission, Presbyterian Peacemaking Program*



A LEGACY OF PEACEMAKING WITNESS

Since 1980, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), along with its predecessor denominations, has proclaimed peacemaking as a priority for the church. After a significant period of study, a statement, *Peacemaking: The Believers' Calling*, was adopted and has served to guide the church for decades, remaining as relevant today as it was then. It affirms that:

- the Church is faithful to Christ when it is engaged in peacemaking.
- the Church is obedient to Christ when it nurtures and equips God's people as peacemakers.
- the Church bears witness to Christ when it nourishes the moral life of the nation for the sake of peace in our world.

BACKGROUND OF THE COMMITMENT TO PEACEMAKING

Three years later, in 1983, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) reaffirmed its call to peacemaking and introduced the *Commitment to Peacemaking*. It was an opportunity for congregations, mid councils and theological institutions to pledge to use their resources to be peacemakers in the world. Since then approximately 5,000 congregations and other church bodies have affirmed the *Commitment* and used it to shape faithful and creative ministries of peace and justice.

The *Commitment* remains a simple but profound statement. It:

- declares that working for peace is an essential mission priority;
- establishes a framework for planning and implementing peacemaking ministries;
- invites Presbyterians to work for peace in their own lives, their households, their congregations, their communities and the international arena;
- challenges Presbyterians to grow as peacemakers and to pass on a legacy of peacemaking to future generations.

The *Commitment to Peacemaking* identifies a holistic vision of peace that includes eight areas of peacemaking engagement. These really haven't changed over the years. Read them slowly, and see if they seem as critical and as necessary today as they were in 1983:

Worship — provide worship that expresses the reality of God's peace giving.

Prayer and Bible Study — encourage prayer, Bible study and spiritual disciplines that nurture and deepen the spiritual life of the community and equip people to share the gospel message of peace to the world.

Peacemaking in Families and in Community Living — create opportunities for people of all ages to develop peacemaking skills such as conflict resolution, mediation or nonviolence training that will help them grow as peacemakers in their families, in the congregation and in the community.

Community Ministries — work with and support ecumenical and interfaith partners and other bodies in the pursuit of social, racial and economic justice to confront racism and all other forms of prejudice and to respond to people in communities, local, national and worldwide, who are caught in poverty, hurt by employment or burdened by other problems.

Study and Response to Global Issues — support human rights and economic justice efforts in at least one area of the world through presbytery partnerships and sister countries.

Global Security — study global security concerns, work for worldwide arms control and support alternatives to military solutions to international and civil conflicts.

Making Peace with the Earth — protect and restore the environment through study, advocacy and individual and corporate lifestyle commitments.

Receiving the Peace and Global Witness Offering — support financially the churchwide peacemaking effort by receiving the Peace and Global Witness Offering.

About the COMPANION GUIDE

This Companion Guide has been developed not to replace the Commitment to Peacemaking, but to accompany it as a resource and a tool, assisting congregations, mid councils and theological institutions as they make, reaffirm and deepen their commitment to peacemaking.

It is intended to help Presbyterians practice peacemaking in a focused and ongoing fashion. Instead of occurring only at certain times of the year associated with days of emphasis or seasons of the church or calendar year, the Companion Guide offers a model for year-round peacemaking engagement. Through a unique process of worship, spiritual grounding and reflection, community building and partnership, study and preparation, and direct action and advocacy, Presbyterians are invited to engage in an intentional “development” of their peacemaking work and witness:



WORSHIP — As the central act of the people of God, worship continually centers and directs our peacemaking work and witness over and over again. Resources include hymns, prayers, litanies and sermon suggestions.



SPIRITUAL GROUNDING AND REFLECTION — Informed by scripture, theological reflection and spirit-led wonder, we lay a spiritual foundation that will support our peacemaking practice. Resources include scripture references, confessional material, discernment guides, prayers and communal questions.



COMMUNITY-BUILDING AND PARTNERSHIPS — We don't do this work alone or in isolation. We learn about and gather the resources we'll need within and beyond the congregation, identifying partners and those already doing the work. We find allies and connect to impacted communities. Resources include suggested local, state and national organizations, ecumenical and interfaith partners and other congregations and mid councils engaged in the work.



STUDY AND PREPARATION — We recognize the importance of study in our preparation as peacemakers. We seek to deepen our knowledge, broaden our understanding and heighten our awareness of the challenges we face as peacemakers. We delve deeply into the issue areas and identify root causes. Intentional preparation sharpens our skills and readies us to take action. Resources include recommended books, study guides, articles, videos and websites.



DIRECT ACTION AND ADVOCACY — We are peacemakers in word and in deed. We speak out and speak up, speaking truth to power, advocating for just changes, knowing that silence is complicity. We also take action, not simply to alleviate immediate suffering and injustice but to expose and address their structural and systemic root causes. Resources include suggested actions and best practices and recommended forms of advocacy to address the issue area.

FIVE AREAS OF INTEREST IN THE COMPANION GUIDE

This guide outlines how Presbyterians can apply each step in the unique process outlined above to one of five areas of emphasis. These areas, identified by the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, also align with the current priorities, initiatives and policies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). These are not the only areas of peacemaking engagement, to be sure, but they are some of the most persistent, prevailing and pressing challenges for Presbyterian peacemakers today. They are:

- **Poverty**
- **Violence**
- **Racism**
- **Climate change**
- **Immigration/migration**

Several of the areas of emphasis share common cause with other PC(USA) initiatives. An [Earth Care Congregation](#) or a [Matthew 25 Church](#), for instance, will find those efforts consistent with the emphases suggested above.

IDENTIFYING THE EMPHASIS FOR PEACEMAKING

Decisions about the Commitment to Peacemaking have always been made at the local level as an expression of the commitments and concerns of a particular community of faith. PC(USA) congregations, mid councils and theological institutions have committed to peacemaking and directed their peacemaking efforts to the issues, concerns and needs that align most closely with their priorities and passions. Many congregations do the same thing year after year; others move on to new areas of emphasis for peacemaking from one year to the next. The Companion Guide helps worshiping communities expand and deepen their expressions of peacemaking. Congregations that want to deepen their existing peacemaking emphasis will find guidance to take their peacemaking efforts to the next level. Those that wish to try a new, yet-unventured expression of peacemaking will find what they need to get started on something new.

DISCERNMENT FOR PEACEMAKING

For those congregations that have yet to commit to peacemaking, a good place to start is the helpful study resource for church sessions, [Exploring the Commitment to Peacemaking](#). For a congregation that committed to peacemaking in the distant past, [Renewing the Commitment to Peacemaking](#) will help as a resource to refresh, renew and reawaken that commitment. If a congregation is uncertain as to its status as a “peacemaking congregation,” please contact the [Presbyterian Peacemaking Program](#), and we can provide that information

QUESTIONS?

If you have questions about the *Commitment to Peacemaking* or the Companion Guide, please email the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program at peacemaking@presbyterianmission.org. You can also call our office directly at 502-569-5805.

Peacemaking congregations that would like guidance in determining the area of emphasis for their future peacemaking work and witness should refer to the resources for “Living Out the Commitment to Peacemaking” on the Peacemaking Program’s website.

A CURATED COLLECTION OF RESOURCES

As previously mentioned, the Companion Guide is not a program, curriculum or lesson plan. It is a curated collection of suggestions, best practices and resources for each step in the process to assist congregations, mid councils, and other Presbyterian entities as they explore new areas for their peacemaking witness or as they deepen their existing commitments. One of the key features of the Companion Guide is that it is an “evergreen” resource that can be updated and revised over time. We enlisted expert and experienced “curators” for each of the sections and are grateful for their willingness to help us create this resource.

- **Poverty** — Alonzo Johnson, Coordinator, Self-Development of People
- **Violence** — Roger Powers, Pastor, St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, Albuquerque, NM
- **Racism** — Denise Anderson, Coordinator, Racial & Intercultural Justice
- **Climate change** — Rebecca Barnes, Coordinator, Presbyterian Hunger Program; Jessica Maudlin, Associate for Sustainable Living and Earth Care
- **Immigration/migration** — Susan Krehbiel, Associate for Refugees and Asylum, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance; Amanda Craft, Manager for Advocacy, Office of Immigration Issues; Teresa Waggener, Immigration Attorney, Office of Immigration issues

Readers should note that the section on violence is unique because it consists of two parts: “[Violence in Families and Communities](#)” and “[Collective Violence — The U.S. and Global Security](#).” The first part, “Violence in Families and Communities,” helps congregations discern how to address self-directed violence and interpersonal violence including suicide, bullying, domestic violence, sexual violence and gun violence. The second part, “Collective Violence — The U.S. and Global Security,” helps congregations discern how to address collective violence or violence on a much larger, systemic and cultural scale including armed conflict within or between nation-states, genocide, repression and terrorism.

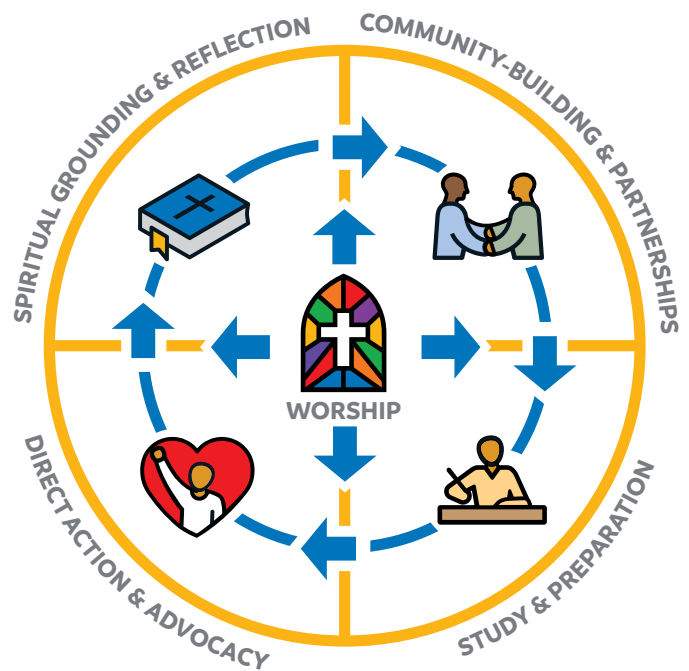
UTILIZING THE COMPANION GUIDE

The Companion Guide’s approach is for a congregation to spend a year utilizing resources outlined for the chosen issue area, culminating in action and advocacy. For congregations participating in the Season of Peace and receiving the Peace and Global Witness Offering on World Communion Sunday, it is suggested that the yearlong cycle begin and end during the Season of Peace. During the Season, congregations can conclude and celebrate the previous year’s accomplishments and begin their new year of peacemaking engagement. A possible yearlong schedule that follows the programmatic year of the congregation might look something like this:

Sep. – Oct.	Announce the area of peacemaking emphasis for the coming year. Participate in the Peace and Global Witness Offering.
Nov. – Dec.	Engage in spiritual grounding and reflection.
Jan. – Feb.	Explore community-building and partnerships.
Mar. – Apr.	Study and prepare.
May – June	Take part in direct action and advocacy.
July – Aug.	Evaluate, report and celebrate the accomplishments. Practice discernment, and identify the next area of peacemaking emphasis.

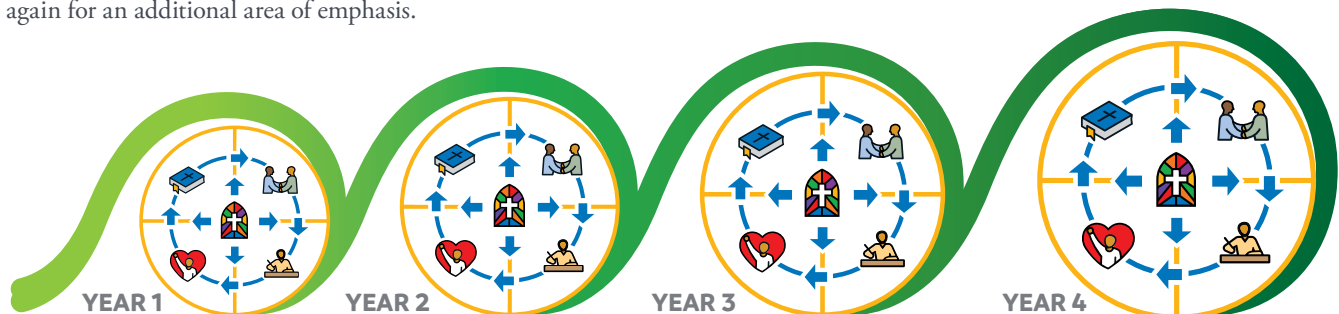
ONE-YEAR CYCLE:

A congregation chooses an area of emphasis and then engages in a one-year cycle of spiritual grounding and reflection, community building and partnership, study and preparation, and direct action and advocacy. Because worship continually centers and directs our peacemaking work as Christians, and is often incorporated into the other steps in the cycle, it lies at the center of this process.



MULTI-YEAR CYCLE:

As a congregation engages in the one-year cycle over a number of years on their chosen area of emphasis, they explore new resources, build new partnerships, and undergo further discernment about possible solutions. The congregation goes from viewing surface level issues related to the area of emphasis to recognizing and addressing root causes and the intersectionality across all the areas of emphasis. Over time, the focus, effectiveness, and reach of their efforts increases and their commitment deepens. Eventually, the congregation may decide to begin the cycle again for an additional area of emphasis.





POVERTY

Curated by Alonzo Johnson,
Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People

INTRODUCTION

Poverty can be understood as the lack of income sufficient to meet basic needs for nourishment, clothing, shelter, healthcare and sustainable family life. Also, in a developed, industrial, or post-industrial society, poverty is lack of access to social goods (such as education) that are essential for employment as well as to other measures of dignity, freedom and participation in communal life.

WE ACKNOWLEDGE THAT POVERTY IS COMPLEX AND INTERSECTIONAL:

- Racism, classism, ageism and sexism are well-documented and mutually reinforcing trends. For instance, disproportionate numbers of African-American and Hispanic families are headed by women and have little net worth (even as White Americans (especially women and children) constitute the largest number in poverty).
- Homelessness is one of the most egregious signs of poverty.
- Assemblies have spoken on guaranteed minimum wages, full employment, considering areas of high unemployment as disaster areas, welfare reform that does not require workfare or other policies that punish the poor and supporting programs geared towards meeting the needs of women, infants and children.
- Trends of acute inequality, declining lifespans, and higher infant mortality have resumed upward trajectories with a lowering of taxes for the wealthy and increases in the cost of medical care in the past two years.
- Debt loads and retirement insecurity are patterns of poverty that are characteristic of the United States, unique among developed nations.
- Disenfranchisement of people, including mass incarceration, leads to poverty.
- Conflict, violence and militarism are implicated in rising rates of poverty.
- Poverty, climate change and ecological injustice are interlocking issues in which environmental ills disproportionately fall on individuals and communities already experiencing poverty, hunger and other social oppressions. Likewise, those same communities are removed from access to and care of healthy, clean water, land and air.

25%

Twenty-five percent of very young children (under six) are now living in poverty, an alarming fact given that the greatest threat to the healthy development of children is poverty and its long-lasting, negative consequences: inadequate amounts and quality of food, exposure to violence, underfunded schools and lack of early childhood educational opportunities, frequent housing mobility, exposure to pollution and other health risks. (World of Hurt, Word of Life, 220th General Assembly (2012))

- Determining acceptable minimum standards of living and poverty rates is influenced by moral actors in a society, such as the Church. Because income is linked to employment, church policy uses phrases like “family-sustaining, living wage,” and supports public investment to compensate for market failures.
- Poverty often results from wealth and resource accumulation (and hoarding) by those in power. Reformed theology favors balancing economic as well as political power, as seen in support for workers’ rights to organize, the progressive income tax, and luxury taxes.

Acute poverty has many causes. It is in part a consequence of each country’s history, such as colonial exploitation, sometimes compounded by domestic ethnic rivalry and the failure of unifying national leadership. Even where adequate resources are potentially available to satisfy basic needs, such factors as corruption, political instability, tyrannical governments, economic mismanagement, control of economic resources by elite minorities, excessive military expenditures, ethnic conflicts, civil wars, high population growth, poor education, and cultural customs such as the subordination of women, have contributed significantly to impoverishment. (Hope For A Global Future [208th General Assembly 1996])



WORSHIP

Prayers

Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People (SDOP) — Created in 1970, SDOP carries out its commitment to poverty alleviation through partnerships both domestically and internationally with groups seeking to take charge of their own lives, change their conditions and produce long-term changes within their communities. This book of [Sermons and Liturgies](#) is a thematic collection designed to liturgically emphasize the work of justice and poverty alleviation. SDOP, along with Presbyterian Disaster Assistance and Presbyterian Hunger Program, is supported by the [One Great Hour of Sharing](#) special offering.

Here are two prayers from this resource by former SDOP National Committee member Dr. Curtis Kearns:

God of Love, your compassion extends to all people—the sinful and the devout, the poor and the wealthy, the humble and the powerful. As we gather in Christian love, let us care for one another and work for the empowerment of those within our faith community and in communities of need both near and far. We pray that all may know the justice that flows from your abiding love and the hope that comes from your healing grace. In the name of Christ we pray, Amen.

Mighty God, parent to a borderless creation, light unto a world too often consumed by dark intent, hope for a human spirit that struggles to appreciate the values of justice and righteousness, we come before you, asking your blessing on the work of this community. Strengthen our faith, energize our efforts, make special our joy. Grant that our actions and deliberations be to your glory and to the honor of your dear Son, Jesus. Amen.

SDOP also makes available a [Sunday resource](#) designed to interpret the work of the program. The website includes sermons, liturgies, prayers, stories and a couple of hymns. This resource can also be used throughout the year.

Hymns — *Glory to God* hymnal (761-766 are poverty-related or refer to poverty and discipleship)

- 761: **Called as Partners in Christ's Service**
- 762: **When the Poor Ones**
- 763: **The Lord Hears the Cry of the Poor**
- 765: **For the Troubles and the Sufferings**
- 765: **Canto de Esperanza/God of Hope**
- 766: **The Church of Christ Cannot Be Bound**

Glory to God also contains liturgical pieces that reference the poor (Purple Pew Edition, Ecumenical).

OTHER RESOURCES

Kairos Center for Religions, Rights and Social Justice — Kairos Center works to inform and strengthen social movements. With Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharris as one of its key leaders, Kairos Center is also dedicated to identifying, developing and communicating the liberating ways of thinking and being religious that are arising through the work of the *Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival*. Kairos is social-justice-based and has quite an exhaustive number of resources.

Book of Common Worship — 2018 Edition
Page 557, "Mission in the World"

Preaching God's Transforming Justice — A Lectionary Commentary Series, Years B and C, Edited by Ronald J. Allen, Dale Andrews and Dawn Ottoni Wilhelm—WJK Press, 2012



SPIRITUAL GROUNDING AND REFLECTION

PC(USA) Book of Confessions

The following references are places in our confessions where poverty and/or social justice are highlighted:

Confession of '67 (*The Mission of the Church* — 9.31-9.33) Emphasizes the work of the church in the world, reconciliation and seeking through our work as disciples the well-being of all persons. Also acknowledges the need for the believer to recognize one's own complicity in injustice.

9.31–.33 God's message of reconciliation shares his labor of healing the enmities which separate men from God and from each other. Christ has called the church to this mission and given it the gift of the Holy Spirit. The church maintains continuity with the apostles and with Israel by faithful obedience to his call. 9.32 The life, death, resurrection, and promised coming of Jesus Christ has set the pattern for the church's mission. His life as man involves the church in the common life of men. His service to men commits the church to work for every form of human well-being. His suffering makes the church sensitive to all the sufferings of mankind so that it sees the face of Christ in the faces of men in every kind of need. His crucifixion discloses to the church God's judgment on man's inhumanity to man and the awful consequences of its own complicity in injustice. In the power of the risen Christ and the

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hope of his coming, the church sees the promise of God's renewal of man's life in society and of God's victory over all wrong. 9.33 The church follows this pattern in the form of its life and in the method of its action. So to live and serve is to confess Christ as Lord.

Belhar Confession (10.7-10.9)

Explicitly mentions the poor and emphasizes the need for living in the ways of justice.

Brief Statement of Faith (11.2)

We trust in Jesus Christ, fully human, fully God. Jesus proclaimed the reign of God: preaching good news to the poor and release to the captives, teaching by word and deed and blessing the children, healing the sick and binding up the brokenhearted, eating with outcasts, forgiving sinners, and calling all to repent and believe the gospel. Unjustly condemned for blasphemy and sedition, Jesus was crucified, suffering the depths of human pain and giving his life for the sins of the world. God raised this Jesus from the dead, vindicating his sinless life, breaking the power of sin and evil, delivering us from death to life eternal.

Poverty and Justice Bible

(Contemporary English Version) American Bible Society, 1995/2008. The Poverty and Justice Bible is a unique document where all Scripture passages related to poverty and justice are highlighted. There is a substantial resource in the middle of the book entitled "The Core" that provides opportunities for deeper study and faith engagement. This is a helpful resource for worship, preaching and teaching about poverty and its related intersectional issues.

30 Days with the Belhar Confession

This useful companion to the Belhar Confession was produced by the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program. It weaves together Scripture passages and the Confession's timely themes of unity, reconciliation and justice. Written by a diverse collection of scholars, theologians and church leaders, it is the perfect resource for individuals, study groups or entire congregations wanting to familiarize themselves with the Confession through prayer and reflection. The Belhar Confession in its entirety is included at the back of the resource.

Peacemaking: The Believers' Calling

This foundational document for the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program has numerous references to economic and social justice. It was born in part from concern for the hungry and oppressed of the world.

BEING Reformed, Faith Seeking Understanding Series

The Church and Social Issues Jennifer R. Ayres (2014): This study considers the church's role of advocating social issues in the public sphere and encourages readers to actively participate in God's work of transforming the world.

Study and Devotional Guide for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, the United Nations adopted 17 goals to end poverty, fight inequalities and mitigate climate change. This guide outlines all 17 Sustainable Development Goals and relevant efforts by the PC(USA) and our partners to achieve the goals and includes biblical reflections from PC(USA) staff to provide scriptural justification for these efforts.

Praying for Justice: A Lectionary of Christian Concern, by R. Anderson Campbell & Steve Sherwood with Paula Hampton (Barclay Press, 2017).

Written in response to the 2016 U.S. presidential election, this book is not free of agenda. It is an act of resistance. God is greater than any politician, political system, or nation. And now is the time for people of faith to act in tangible, costly and courageous ways. This book calls upon Christians to live into wisdom, prudence, compassion, humility and discernment, to pursue the heart of God's kingdom vision: a society in which all are valued as individuals bearing God's image.

For They Shall Be Fed: Scripture Readings and Prayers for a Just World, Ron Sider (ed.) (W Publishing Group, 2003).

This book brings together in one place passages from the Scriptures pertaining to hunger, justice and the poor, along with the concerns of prominent Christian leaders, to challenge us to become proactive in the battle against hunger.



COMMUNITY BUILDING AND PARTNERSHIPS

PC(USA) Programs and Initiatives

Becoming a Matthew 25 Church — Learn more about how to become a Matthew 25 congregation in the PC(USA). Executive Director of PMA, Rev. Dr. Diane Givens Moffett lays out a bold and engaging vision for the church through Matthew 25. Addressing issues of systemic poverty is one of its objectives.

The Presbyterian Office of Public Witness — Located in Washington, D.C., this office is the public policy information and advocacy office of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Its task is to advocate, and help the church to advocate, the social witness perspectives and policies of the Presbyterian General Assembly.

Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People provides listings of funded partners by year on their website. Individuals concerned about poverty and seeking to connect with organizations can look here or contact SDOP for more information:

Presbyterian Hunger Program — Learn more about congregations committed to battling hunger and poverty both domestically and globally through programs like Enough for Everyone and Joining Hands.

Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations — Addressing intersectional and global issues connected to poverty and development.

Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) — There are several PC(USA) policy statements that address the issues of poverty, economics and related intersectional issues that are available for download

Other Helpful Programs and Initiatives

Children's Defense Fund — The Children's Defense Fund grew out of the Civil Rights Movement under the leadership of Marian Wright Edelman. The Children's Defense Fund (CDF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit child advocacy organization that has worked relentlessly for more than 40 years to ensure a level playing field for all children. They champion [policies](#) and [programs](#) that lift children out of poverty, protect them from abuse and neglect and ensure their access to health care, quality education and a moral and spiritual foundation.

Ecumenical Poverty Initiative — The goal of the Ecumenical Poverty Initiative is to empower and mobilize the faith community to speak and act to end the scandal of poverty in the United States. Churches have been powerful voices for generations on a range of defining social justice issues, most importantly the need to address poverty.

The Poor People's Campaign — A National Call for Moral Revival has reached out to communities in more than 30 states across this nation. They gather testimonies from hundreds of poor people and engage in social justice advocacy. PPC's moral agenda is drawn from a deep engagement and commitment to social justice and advocacy for the poor and dispossessed. Most notable in this iteration of the movement are Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharris and Rev. Dr. William Barber.

Bryan Stevenson and the Equal Justice Initiative — The Equal Justice Initiative is committed to ending mass incarceration and excessive punishment in the United States, to challenging racial and economic injustice and to protecting basic human rights for the most vulnerable people in American society.

National Urban League — A historic civil rights organization dedicated to economic empowerment, equality, and social justice. The Urban League collaborates at the national and local levels with community leaders, policymakers and corporate partners to elevate standards of living for African Americans and other historically underserved groups. Check to see if there is one near you.

Interfaith Worker Justice — Interfaith Worker Justice (IWJ) is a national network that builds collective power by advancing the rights of workers through unions, worker

centers and other expressions of the labor movement and by engaging diverse faith communities and allies in joint action, from grassroots organizing to shaping policy at the local, state and national levels.

Sojourners — The mission of Sojourners is to articulate the biblical call to social justice, to inspire hope and build a movement to transform individuals, communities, the church and the world. Sojourners envisions a future in which Christians put their faith into action in the passionate pursuit of social justice, peace and environmental stewardship, working in partnership with people of other perspectives, for the common good of communities, families and individuals.

United Workers — United Workers (UW) was founded in 2002 by homeless day laborers meeting in an abandoned firehouse-turned-shelter. UW is inspired by past human rights struggles, such as the fight to end slavery, the struggle for civil rights, calls for immigration with dignity, the labor movement, the fight for international economic justice and other human rights and justice movements. For the first years of its founding, the organization focused on understanding the root causes of poverty and dedicated itself to organizing around universal human rights.

Facebook Groups Addressing Poverty

[Poverty USA](#)

[Poverty is Not a Crime Child](#)

[Poverty Action Group](#)

[Coalition to Combat Poverty](#)

Intersectional Issues

There are a number of issues that intersect with the problem of poverty: race, education, child advocacy, health care, fair wages, aging, homelessness and rural life, to name a few. These are some of the helpful programs and organizations that work to address these intersectional issues:

Race and Poverty

Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) is committed to ending mass incarceration and excessive punishment in the United States, to challenging racial and economic injustice and to protecting basic human rights for the most vulnerable people in American society. EJI produces groundbreaking reports, an award-winning wall calendar and short films that explore our nation's history of racial injustice. The organization also provides research and recommendations to assist advocates and policymakers in the critically important work of criminal justice reform.

New York University and Wagner University provide multiple courses on inequality, race and poverty.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) works to secure the political, educational, social and economic equality of rights in order to eliminate race-based discrimination and ensure the health and wellbeing of all persons.

Federal Safety Net aggregates and summarizes pertinent information on U.S. poverty and the welfare programs of the federal government.

Education, Child Advocacy and Poverty

Children’s Defense Fund — CDF educates the nation about the needs of children and encourages preventive investments before they get sick, drop out of school, get into trouble or suffer family breakdown. CDF champions policies and programs that lift children out of poverty; protect them from abuse and neglect; and ensure their access to health care, quality education and a moral and spiritual foundation.

Educate a Child, Transform the World — This PC(USA) initiative addresses issues of poverty as connected to education and offers [examples of churches](#) that are engaged in the intersectional issues concerning poverty and education. The “Educate a Child” initiative also provides a [toolkit](#) to help individuals and congregations discern their way of engagement. Educate a Child also has connections to the PC(USA)’s [Pentecost Offering](#).

Health Care and Poverty

Presbyterian Health Education and Welfare Association (PHEWA) — PHEWA’s purpose is to provide resources, peer support and networking connections for Presbyterians involved in social welfare and justice ministries. Since its creation by General Assembly action in 1956, PHEWA has worked to make the church more responsive to the needs of those too often excluded or on the margins of the church and of society, providing opportunities for those much-needed voices and perspectives to be heard.

IMA World Health — IMA believes that as children of God, all people deserve to lead healthy and productive lives. Intentionally ecumenical, the organization provides health services and builds healthy communities around the world.

Fair Wages and Poverty

Fuerza Laboral — The mission of this workers’ rights center in Central Falls, Rhode Island is to shift the balance of power in our economy towards labor by educating, training and organizing workers to become community leaders. They work to take direct action to recover unpaid wages, improve workplace conditions and bring about institutional changes that will better prevent injustices. They are working to construct networks of worker-owned co-ops that will provide living-wage employment instead of the low-wage, exploitative jobs typically reserved for immigrants and people of color. Even though this organization operates in Rhode Island, it still serves as a national model for advocacy on the issue of labor rights and fair wages.

One Fair Wage — This effort among restaurant and food workers is advancing campaigns across the country to pass legislation in cities and states that will require the restaurant industry to pay all its employees at least the full minimum wage.

Fight for 15 — The Fight for \$15 began in 2012 when 200 fast-food workers walked off the job to demand \$15 per hour and union rights in New York City. Today, they are a global movement in over 300 cities on six continents. They are fast-food workers, home health aides, child care teachers, airport workers, adjunct professors, retail employees and underpaid workers everywhere.

Aging and Poverty

Paper: “Income Poverty in Old Age: An Emerging Development Priority” — Developed by the United Nations’ Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Program on Aging, this document identifies poverty as a major threat to the well-being of older persons.

Article: “An Aging Society Changes the Story on Poverty for Retirees”, New York Times, December 22, 2015 — This article explores the relationship between poverty and expanding life expectancy.

Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF)—KFF is a nonprofit organization focusing on national health issues, as well as the U.S. role in global health policy. Unlike grant-making foundations, Kaiser develops and runs its own policy analysis, journalism and communications programs, sometimes in partnership with major news organizations. Their [“Poverty Rate by Age”](#) report in 2017 reports poverty rates in each state using the U.S. Census Bureau’s poverty threshold.

Article: “Aging Conference Reveals Poverty’s Impact on Older Adults”, AARP — This article from the 2016 American Society on Aging conference identifies women, people of color and those in poor health as most susceptible to poverty as older adults.

Homelessness and Poverty

National Coalition for the Homeless is a national network of people who are currently experiencing or who have experienced homelessness, activists and advocates, community-based and faith-based service providers and others committed to a single mission: To end and prevent homelessness while ensuring that the immediate needs of those experiencing homelessness are met and their civil rights are respected and protected.

Presbyterian Network to End Homelessness is a network that exists to help churches embrace a comprehensive approach to ending homelessness. PNEH provides resources including webinars, toolkits and handbooks related to homelessness and advocacy.

Rural Life and Poverty

U.S. Department of Agriculture provides research on the economic, social, spatial, temporal and demographic factors that affect the poverty status of rural residents.

Poverty in Appalachia (from Good Works Inc.) is a good, detailed infographic about the poverty status of the Appalachian region that follows the spine of the Appalachian Mountains from southern New York to Northern Mississippi. It provides statistical information on how living in poverty affects residents' access to necessary resources.

Global Organizations and Initiatives

Bread for The World is a collective Christian voice urging our nation's decision makers to end hunger at home and abroad. Bread equips people to write personal letters and emails, meet with their members of Congress and work with others to end hunger. Working through churches, campuses and other organizations, we engage people in organized advocacy. Each year, Bread invites churches across the country to take up an Offering of Letters to Congress on legislation that impacts hungry and poor people. We organize advocacy campaigns to pass or block federal legislation that will help end hunger and poverty.

Act Alliance is the largest coalition of Protestant and Orthodox churches and church-related organizations engaged in humanitarian, development and advocacy work in the world, consisting of 155 members working together in over 140 countries to create positive and sustainable change in the lives of poor and marginalized people regardless of their religion, politics, gender, sexual orientation, race or nationality in keeping with the highest international codes and standards.

Church World Service (CWS) is a cooperative ministry of 37 Christian denominations and communions, providing sustainable self-help, development, disaster relief and refugee assistance around the world. The CWS mission is to eradicate hunger and poverty and to promote peace and justice at the national and international level through collaboration with partners abroad and in the U.S.

Oxfam is a global organization working to end the injustice of poverty. We help people build better futures for themselves, hold the powerful accountable and save lives in disasters.

Migrating Out of Poverty Blogspot — This resource focuses on the relationship between internal and regional migration and poverty internationally. The blogspot currently comprises five partners:

The African Centre for Migration and Society (ACMS) in South Africa

The Centre for Migration Studies (CMS) in Legon, Accra.

The Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA) based in Ethiopia

L'université Assane Seck Ziguinchor (UASZ) in Senegal

University of Sussex (US) in the U.K.

Ecumenical Partners

Many of the following partners have lists of vast resources that address poverty and related issues:

Evangelical Lutheran Church of America

United Methodist Church

Pan-Methodist Campaign for Children

United Church of Christ

Episcopal Church

Southern Baptist Convention

American Baptist Churches USA

Mennonite Church USA

Catholics Confront Global Poverty

Catholic Social Teaching

World Council of Churches



STUDY AND PREPARATION

Bible Studies

Presbyterian Women's Bible Studies — PW / Horizons Bible studies are profound, incredibly insightful, well prepared and powerful. These studies are always useful for creating generative conversation and promoting action. Bible study authors are pastors, professors and educators — faithful women. Two outstanding PW Bible studies that address poverty and social justice issues directly are Dale Lindsay Morgan's *Jubilee! Luke's Gospel for the Poor* (2008–09), and Margaret Aymer's *Confessing the Beatitudes, Matthew and Luke* (2011-12).

Books

Because poverty is an intersectional challenge, we have listed books that cover a whole range of issues connected to poverty.

The New Jim Crow; Mass Incarceration in an Age of Colorblindness by Michelle Alexander (The New Press, 2010).

The Third Reconstruction; How a Moral Movement is Overcoming the Politics of Division and Fear, by William J. Barber (Beacon Press, 2016).

Revolution and Renewal: How Churches Are Saving Our Cities, by Tony Campolo (Westminster/John Knox, 2000)

Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City, by Matthew Desmond (Crown Books, 2016).

Worlds Apart: Why Poverty Persists in Rural America, by Cynthia M. Duncan (Yale University Press, 1999).

Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War On the Poor, by Paul Farmer (University of California Press, 2005).

From Poverty to Power: How Active Citizens and Effective States Can Change the World, by Duncan Green (Oxfam International, 2008).

The Problem with Wealth, A Christian Response to a Culture of Affluence, by Elizabeth Hinson Hasty (Orbis, 2017).

Hope for The Future: Answering God's Call to Justice for Our Children, by Shannon Daley-Harris (WJK Press, 2016).

Nobody: Casualties of America's War on the Vulnerable from Ferguson to Flint and Beyond, by Marc Lamont Hill (Atria Books, 2017).

Thus Far on the Way: Toward a Theology of Child Advocacy, by Eileen Lindner (Witherspoon Press, 2006).

Toxic Charity: How Churches and Charities Hurt Those They Help (And How to Reverse it), by Robert Lupton (Harper One, 2011).

Dead Aid: Why Aid is not Working and How There is a Better Way for Africa, by Dambisa Moyo (Penguin Books, 2009).

Walking with The Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development, by Bryant L. Myers (Orbis, 2011)

Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: Moving from Affluence to Generosity, by Ron Sider (Thomas Nelson, 2015).

Rural Poverty in the United States, Edited by Ann R. Tickamyer, Jennifer Sherman and Jennifer Warlick (Columbia University Press, 2017)

Not Angels but Agencies: The Ecumenical Response to Poverty — A Primer, by Michael Taylor (SCM Press, 2011).

Always with Us? What Jesus Really Said About the Poor, by Liz Theoharris (Eerdman's 2017).

Jesus and the Disinherited, by Howard Thurman (Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949, 2012).

Decolonizing Wealth: Indigenous Wisdom to Heal Divides and Restore Balance, by Edgar Villanueva (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2018).

Children's Books

The Barefoot Mommy — 18 Children's Books about Poverty and Hunger. This handy resource for children is from a mother/theologian who is not afraid to take difficult topics like poverty and turn them into insightful, compassionate and informative children's books.

Films and Documentaries

PBS/Frontline — Poverty, Politics and Profit (2017).

Frontline has served as American public television's flagship public affairs series since 1983. Described by The Atlantic as "the best news program on television," the series has built a reputation for powerful investigative storytelling that tackles the tough, controversial and complex stories that shape our times. In this documentary, Frontline and NPR investigate the billions spent on affordable housing, and why so few get the help they need.

Country Boys (2006). For everyone who remembers what it was like to be young — when the whole world seemed to stretch out before you while you were stuck in your own backyard — this special Frontline series tells the story of Chris and Cody, two boys coming of age in the Appalachian hills of Floyd County in eastern Kentucky. The film bears witness to the two boys' struggles to overcome the poverty and family dysfunction of their childhoods in a quest for a brighter future. It also offers unexpected insights into a forgotten corner of rural America that is at once isolated and connected, a landscape dotted with roughshod trailer homes and wired with DSL.

13th (2019). In this film, Ava DuVernay addresses the issue of poverty and policy through the lens of mass incarceration. The title of Ava DuVernay's extraordinary and galvanizing documentary refers to the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, which reads, "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States." The progression from that second, qualifying clause to the horrors of mass criminalization and the sprawling American prison industry is laid out by DuVernay with bracing lucidity. With a potent mixture of archival footage and testimony from a dazzling array of activists, politicians, historians and formerly incarcerated women and men, DuVernay creates a work of grand historical synthesis.

The Line: Poverty in America (2012). Emmy Award-winning producer, Linda Midgett, shows us in this groundbreaking documentary a new face of poverty in America. About 50 million people in the United States live below the poverty line (In 2014, \$23,850 for a family of four), and one in four American children lives in poverty. But what is poverty in America? What defines "the line," and how can the church and community make a difference?

Flint: The Poisoning of an American City (coming soon 2019). 100,000 people have been poisoned by lead, a lifelong affliction, yet somehow this shocking event has been normalized in the U.S. *Flint: The Poisoning of an American City* gives voice to the current struggle of city residents and follows the environmental history of the river and how the continued abuse and neglect of city

infrastructure and environmental regulations have led to the poisoning of a city. Flint explores the critical question of how this could happen in America, and how this event should serve as a warning for the rest of the country. This documentary educates but also enrages and seeks to radically change how we view and value water.

The End Of Poverty (2008). The aphorism “The poor are always with us” dates back to the New Testament, but while the phrase is still sadly apt in the 21st century, few seem to be able to explain why poverty is so widespread. Activist filmmaker Philippe Diaz examines the history and impact of economic inequality in the third world in *The End of Poverty* and makes the compelling argument that it’s not an accident or simple bad luck that has created a growing underclass around the world. Diaz traces the growth of global poverty back to colonization in the 15th century, and features interviews with a number of economists, sociologists and historians who explain how poverty is the clear consequence of free-market economic policies that allow powerful nations to exploit poorer countries for their assets and keep money in the hands of the wealthy rather than distributing it more equitably to the people who have helped them gain their fortunes. Diaz also explores how wealthy nations (especially the United States) seize a disproportionate share of the world’s natural resources and how this imbalance is having a dire impact on the environment as well as the economy.

Articles and Journal Collections

States across the Nation are Criminalizing Poverty

(Editorial Board, *Washington Post*, 2018)

What We Think Poverty Looks Like, Tracie McMillan

(*NY Times*, 2017)

Escaping Poverty Requires Almost 20 Years With

Nearly Nothing Going Wrong, Gillian B. White

(*The Atlantic*, 2017).

Rural Poverty in America is an Emergency,

Brakkton Booker (NPR, 2018)

Extreme Poverty Returns to America, Premilla

Nadasen (*Washington Post*, 2017)

The Christian Century

Systemic Poverty: Presbyterian Mission Agency

Board discusses how the church is called to respond,

Leslie Scanlon, (*The Presbyterian Outlook*, 2019)

The Thoughtful Christian

Unbound: An Interactive Journal of Christian

Social Justice

Lists of Anti-Poverty Organizations

Out of Poverty Caucus

45 Organizations That Battle Poverty

Statistics

The U.S. Census Bureau provides poverty data from several household surveys and programs. Here you can find poverty estimates, learn about these surveys and programs, and get guidance on demographics,

geographics and what constitutes poverty.

While children remain the poorest group in America, these statistics from ***The Children’s Defense Fund*** provide a state-by-state analysis of child poverty in 2017.

The Pew Research Center provides data and articles on poverty and economic well-being.

U.S. Federal Poverty Guidelines — The following links help provide an understanding of what constitutes poverty in the U.S. and what the **current federal poverty level** is. This is information that is always helpful to know and have.

Institute for Women’s Policy Research produces the most widely cited research on the gender wage gap in the United States.

These organizations provide some of the most expansive and varied poverty statistics:

Barna Group has conducted more than one million interviews over the course of hundreds of studies, and has become a go-to source for insights about faith and culture, leadership and vocation and generations.

Oxfam is a global organization working to end the injustice of poverty. We help people build better futures for themselves, hold the powerful accountable and save lives in disasters.

The Brookings Institution is a nonprofit public policy organization based in Washington, D.C. Our mission is to conduct in-depth research that leads to new ideas for solving problems facing society at the local, national and global level.



DIRECT ACTION AND ADVOCACY

Ten Effective Strategies to Fight Poverty

These ideas are inspired by Meagan Hurley and the Borgen Project.

1. *Become aware.*

The first step in conquering any problem is acknowledging that there is one. Awareness can start with simple things like watching and reading the news, or even taking five minutes out of your day just to call your local nonprofits and shelters and find out what is going on right now, and what efforts are being put forth to assist the world’s poor. You can use “Educational Resources & Avenues for Action” provided by the Presbyterian Mission Agency for personal devotion, as sermon starters or in small-group study. They can also be adapted for youth group or intergenerational activities.

2. *Generate awareness.*

It’s not enough just to become aware yourself of the current happenings in global poverty. In order to make an impact, you have to make others aware as well. Educate and inform people of the cause—and then tell them what they can do to help.

3. Form a plan of action.

Now that you know that people are suffering, figure out what you can do to help them. Set your own goals and form a plan of action as to how you can go about executing these goals. Let this plan incorporate the assistance of other people and think in forms of both long- and short-term results.

Support efforts to address poverty through the ministries of the Presbyterian Mission Agency.

- Join webinars, trips and campaigns offered through Compassion, Peace and Justice.
- Learn with partners' overseas with World Mission.
- Find worship resources and learning tools with Theology, Formation & Education.
- Put church funds in socially responsible investments.
- Be in community and stand in solidarity with communities with Racial Equity & Women's Intercultural Ministries.

4. Advocate! Make the calls and write the emails.

Begin executing your plan of action by calling and emailing individuals and officials who can help make a difference. Good starting places for this might include church, nonprofit and community and governmental administrators. Here, you can advocate for better public policies, including those that support job creation and greater empowerment of workers, protect family-life balance, strengthen families through life-cycle needs, support families in retirement and times of serious illness, improve the accuracy of official measurements of household economic well-being, create a stronger social safety net, increase social involvement in poorer communities (such as expanded and enriched public schooling) and increase social inclusion and community empowerment (220th General Assembly 2012)

5. Donate.

Find specific organizations that work to fight poverty and donate. Whether it's a small amount or a giant lump sum—anything helps. Government money given to global poverty aid is next to none, and these nonprofits need all the funding they can get.

6. Fundraise.

Maybe you want to help the cause but just don't have anything to spare? In that case, make a fundraising plan. Host activities, write letters, or even raise donations specifically for global poverty resolution.

7. Make use of already available aid products.

Check your credit card companies to see if any options are available where a portion of money is donated to a helpful organization. Also make yourself aware of any website or stores that donate portions of their revenue to nonprofits. (eBay and Amazon are great places to start.).

8. Contact the media.

Write letters to the editor of a news publication, call a local radio station, email news broadcasters. Utilize social media to help get important information circulating in the media. The better we publicize the issue, the more likely people will make an effort to right the wrongs.

9. Divert your spending.

Catch yourself when you're about to make an unnecessary or wasteful purchase. Instead of spending that money, donate it to the cause.

10. Volunteer.

Finally, [get involved](#) in the most efficient way possible—volunteer your time and energy to something that matters, something that helps. Whether it's serving food at a shelter or traveling overseas with a travel study seminar, this is the best way to help those in need most directly. Become a Matthew 25 congregation. Work to incorporate multiple elements of poverty alleviation into the life of your congregation in order to have a holistic focus on poverty.



VIOLENCE IN FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Curated by Rev. Roger Powers, St. Andrew Presbyterian Church (Albuquerque, NM)

To engage in peacemaking means doing more than picking up the pieces in the aftermath. It means being proactive to do what we can to prevent violence from occurring in the first place.

INTRODUCTION

Violence is all around us. A bully hits a classmate on the playground. A teenager is shot in the street. A college sophomore is raped by the guy she's been dating. A father, seemingly out of the blue, commits suicide. Bullying, gun violence, sexual assault and suicide are examples of the many kinds of violence that affect our lives and the lives of others.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines violence as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.” Based on this definition, the WHO identifies three broad categories of violence: self-directed violence, interpersonal violence and collective violence. These three categories can be further subdivided into four types of violence: physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence and neglect.

This section of the Companion Guide will look at the areas of self-directed violence and interpersonal violence. The next section will look at collective violence. Specifically, this section will include resources for worship, study and action on the following kinds of violence:

Suicide — Suicide rates in the U.S. are the highest they've been since World War II. The U.S. suicide rate increased 33% between 1999 and 2017, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

Bullying — Bullying (physical, verbal, social or cyber) is the abuse and mistreatment of someone vulnerable by someone stronger or more powerful. About one in four teenagers experience bullying, but bullying is also experienced by adults — at home, in the workplace, even at church.

Domestic Violence — Domestic violence (also called intimate partner violence, domestic abuse or relationship abuse) is a pattern of behaviors used by one partner to maintain power and control over another partner in an intimate relationship. It includes the use of physical and sexual violence, threats and intimidation, emotional abuse and economic deprivation.

Sexual Violence is when someone forces or manipulates someone else into unwanted sexual activity without their consent. One in three women and one in four men experience sexual violence involving physical contact during their lifetimes. Sexual violence includes rape, sexual assault, child sexual abuse, incest and unwanted sexual contact/touching.

Gun Violence — Each year more than 30,000 people are killed by guns in the U.S. More than half of these gun deaths are suicides.

When it comes to violence, the church often finds itself in the role of responding to violent incidents after they happen, caring for survivors and victims' families. To engage in peacemaking means doing more than picking up the pieces in the aftermath. It means being proactive to do what we can to prevent violence from occurring in the first place.



WORSHIP

Suicide

Caring for the family and friends of someone who has committed suicide and helping them to plan a memorial service poses particular challenges. Help comes from the Suicide Prevention Resource Center's resource [After a Suicide: Recommendations for Religious Services & Other Public Memorial Observances](#) (Newton, MA: Education Development Center, Inc., 2004.) Loved ones of the deceased may be at higher risk of suicide (“suicide contagion”), so it is important that suicide prevention be part of the care provided. When Lakeland Presbyterian Church (Baltimore) held a memorial service for an 18-year-old who had committed suicide, her friends and classmates packed the sanctuary. Everyone there received an Ask4Help! card available through the [Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Program](#), which a teen in crisis can give to someone to say “I need help!” National Suicide Prevention Month (September) offers an appropriate time to plan a worship service on suicide prevention, emphasizing hope and meaning in life and the importance of supportive relationships within the faith community. “[Suicide, Hope, and Love: Reflections on Possibilities within the Faith Communities](#),” by J. Russell Crabtree takes as its starting point Paul's words to the jailer who was about to kill himself “Do not harm yourself, for we are all here” (Acts 16:28). It also includes “A Covenant of Life” liturgy.

Bullying

October is Bullying Prevention Month. Worship resources on bullying include:

“A Litany for Safety in our Public Schools,” by Rev. Bill Johnson (1999).

A prayer from the Hibbert Trust in the UK:

“Bullies’ words sting and slice through me. Bullies’ words twist into shapes that beat me and leave me like a trampled leaf ... Help us to disentangle the knots of confusion and misunderstanding. To understand the hurts that others feel — that we have ignored. Help us to speak of what we feel. Help us to know when others need to speak so that then we can listen.”

Domestic Violence

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. The [Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence Network](#) offers worship resources, including complete services, bulletin inserts and sample sermons that can be used in observing Domestic Violence Awareness Sunday, also in October. Also, visit presbyterianmission.org.

In addition, Susan Jackson Dowd, executive director of Presbyterian Women, has written this prayer:

God of shelter, give refuge to those who suffer violence and abuse in unsafe homes. Bring your peace. God of deliverance, release those who are enslaved and controlled by abusers, and give them sanctuary. Bring your freedom. God of compassion, defend the abused and the innocents who witness violence. Bring your hope. God of salvation, surround, guide and heal those who abuse and bully others. Bring your light. God of perfect love, move us toward holiness in our relationships with you, with one another and with creation. Bring your assurance. God of shelter and peace, deliverance and freedom, compassion and hope, salvation and light, perfect love and assurance, hear our prayer. Amen.

Sexual Violence

The sin of sexual violence can be highlighted in worship in conjunction with Human Trafficking Awareness Month and Stalking Awareness Month (January), Teen Dating Violence Prevention Awareness Month (February), or Child Abuse Prevention Month and Sexual Assault Awareness Month (April). “[Together in Action to end human trafficking](#)” is a downloadable bulletin insert produced by Presbyterian Women and the Human Trafficking Roundtable of the PC(USA).

[Devotions for Human Trafficking Awareness Day](#) (2017) are also available from Compassion, Peace and Justice Ministries of the PC(USA). [Future Church](#) offers a liturgy of lament to help members of the body of Christ whose lives have been impacted (directly or indirectly) by clergy sexual abuse.

Gun Violence

With gun violence affecting more and more of our communities, the new Book of Common Worship (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2018) now includes “Prayers after a Violent Event,” a “Service after a Violent Event,” and a “Service for Justice and Peace,” as well as suggested Scripture readings, hymns and prayers that can be used in the aftermath of a shooting. In addition to providing comfort and support after an incident of gun violence, worship can also be a place where we are challenged and inspired to work for gun violence prevention. National Gun Violence Prevention Sabbath Weekend is held annually on the Thursday–Sunday that includes Dec. 14, the anniversary of the mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School. The Presbyterian Mission Agency has a webpage of [Gun Violence Policies, Studies and Resources](#). The [Presbyterian Peace Fellowship](#) website offers a “Gun Violence Prevention Worship-Action Kit for Presbyterians,” a Gun Violence Prevention Congregational Toolkit as well as sample sermons and other worship resources for free download.

Hymns

Hymns from *Glory to God* appropriate for worship services on the theme of violence in families and communities include:

- 466 **Come and Fill Our Hearts**
- 749 **Come! Live in the Light!**
- 752 **Dona Nobis Pacem**
- 753 **Make Me a Channel of Your Peace**
- 761 **Called as Partners in Christ’s Service**
- 762 **When the Poor Ones**
- 764 **For the Troubles and the Sufferings**
- 765 **May the God of Hope Go with Us**
- 769 **For Everyone Born**

In addition, [Carolyn Winfrey Gillette](#) has written a number of hymns on the theme of violence.



SPIRITUAL GROUNDING AND REFLECTION

The Book of Order on Justice and Peace

The Book of Order (W-5.0304) speaks of how God sends the Church into the world to work for justice and peace: “God sends the Church to work for justice in the world: exercising its power for the common good; dealing honestly in personal and public spheres; seeking dignity and freedom for all people; welcoming strangers in the land; promoting justice and fairness in the law; overcoming disparities between rich and poor; bearing witness against systems of violence and oppression; and redressing wrongs against individuals, groups, and peoples. God also sends the Church to seek peace: in the Church universal, within denominations, and at the congregational level; in the world, where nations and religious or ethnic groups make war against one another; and in local communities, schools, workplaces, neighborhoods, and homes. These acts of peacemaking and justice are established upon God’s gracious act of reconciliation with us in Jesus Christ, and are a way of participating in Christ’s priestly intercession or advocacy for the world.” “In the Service for the Lord’s Day we proclaim, receive, and enact reconciliation with God in Christ. Through the proclamation of the Word we are given the assurance of freedom and peace in Christ and are inspired to share these gifts with others. Through Baptism and the Lord’s Supper we are united with Christ, made one in the Spirit, and empowered to break down the dividing walls of hostility that still separate us from one another. We confess our participation in unjust systems, pray for an end to violence and injustice, offer our gifts to support Christ’s liberating work, and commit ourselves to pursue peace and justice in Jesus’ name.”

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER AS A SESSION, MISSION COMMITTEE OR CONGREGATION

- How has violence (suicide, bullying, domestic violence, sexual violence, or gun violence) touched your life or that of your family or friends?
- In what ways have you been complicit in violence (as a perpetrator, as a passive bystander, through silence and inaction)?
- Have you or your congregation helped victims of violence to heal from their physical and/or emotional trauma? If so, how? If not, why not?
- Have you or your congregation worked to prevent different forms of violence? If so, how? If not, why not?

Suicide

We may not think of suicide prevention as a peacemaking matter, but it is. It’s a matter of personal peacemaking. Someone who is considering suicide is not at peace within themselves—whether it be a veteran suffering from PTSD or moral injury; a lesbian, gay, or transgender teen rejected by family or peers or a senior in the depths of depression. Their inner suffering can become so severe that they just want it to end. A biblical example comes from Acts 16:16-34, where Paul and Silas were imprisoned in Philippi. When an earthquake struck and their jailer woke up to see the prison doors wide open, he assumed that all the prisoners had escaped and that he had completely failed at his job. He was so committed to his work, his identity so caught up in his job, that had he failed, he felt he could not go on living. He drew his sword and was about to kill himself, when Peter shouted out to him: “Don’t harm yourself, for we are all here.” Peter’s intervention saved him.

Bullying

Bullying has been going on for millennia. The Psalmist describes it well: “All day long my enemies taunt me, those who deride me use my name for a curse” (Psalm 102:8). Jesus also was a victim of bullying. When he was arrested “the men who were holding Jesus began to mock him and beat him; they also blindfolded him and kept asking him, ‘Prophesy! Who is it that struck you?’ They kept heaping many other insults on him” (Luke 22:63-65). We often think of bullying as something children and youth have to deal with at school. But bullying happens in many contexts and among adults as well. The Bible also offers wisdom and encouragement to those who face bullies: Deuteronomy 31:6, Psalm 138:7, Romans 12:18-21, Luke 6:27-28, Psalm 34:12-18.

Domestic Violence

The Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence Network (PADVN) offer this theological statement: “Violence is contrary to God’s intentions for the world. This reality demands the response of the church in these days of increasing danger to vulnerable peoples—children, youth, women, disabled and the elderly. Interpreting biblical teachings and responding to the leadership of Jesus Christ in our lives calls the church to a pastoral and moral response through an active program of advocacy and resourcing for transformation.”

The lament of Psalm 55:4-6, 12-14 speaks for many who have experienced domestic violence.

PADVN points out that “in every congregation of every faith, victims, survivors and abusers sit in our pews. Some are listening for words of recognition, understanding, comfort and healing, hoping to hear that the church stands with them and wants them to choose life. All need to hear a clear message that violence in our homes is against the will of God. Our silence makes us complicit to the suffering.”

Sexual Violence

The Bible includes a number of painful stories of violence against women, stories that feminist biblical scholar Phyllis Trible calls “texts of terror.” Examples include the rape of Tamar (2 Samuel 13:1-9), the story of David and Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:1-27), the rape of Dinah (Genesis 34:1-31) and the rape of the concubine (Judges 19:1-20:11). Hearing the cries of these women and learning their stories honors them as children of God and can give victims of sexual violence the courage to find their voices and to tell their own stories today. By contrast, the Bible also includes a number of stories of Jesus treating women with grace and compassion. For example, the woman caught in idolatry (John 8:1-11), the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:1-30) and the woman who anointed Jesus (Mark 14:3-9).

Gun Violence

“Putting an end to America’s gun violence is not an either/or, winner-take-all kind of discussion. To get there, those who hate guns must be willing to sit down with those whose livelihoods depend on them for food or safety and whose culture has praised guns for generations, while those who have never seen a gun they didn’t like must be willing to listen to the fears of children in our inner cities who hear gunshots before they go to sleep at night and are afraid to go to playgrounds because that’s where kids get shot. We must talk together to heal our land.”

– James E. Atwood, *Gundamentalism and Where it is Taking America*



COMMUNITY BUILDING AND PARTNERSHIPS

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER AS A SESSION, MISSION COMMITTEE OR CONGREGATION

- How have members of your congregation been impacted by violence (suicide, bullying, domestic violence, sexual violence, gun violence)?
- Are you able to talk openly in your congregation about these issues? If not, why not?
- Are there doctors, nurses, EMTs or police officers in your congregation who have been on the front lines of treating victims of violence in your community?
- Are there teachers in your congregation who see the impact that violence has on their students?

Most communities have local organizations that care for the victims of violence and that work to prevent violence from occurring in the first place. Take an inventory of

these local organizations in your community. Are there opportunities for your congregation to partner with one or more of these organizations?

- Is there a suicide crisis center in your community?
- Is there a women’s shelter or a rape crisis center in your community?
- Is there a gun violence prevention group in your city or state?
- How is your local hospital involved in violence prevention?
- What are your local schools doing to prevent bullying, suicide and other forms of violence?
- What programs does your local police department offer to help prevent violence in families and in the community?

There are also many national organizations with local affiliates, as well as online resources, where congregations can find assistance. (See below.)

Suicide

- **Soul Shop** offers one-day workshops training church leaders how to help people who may be contemplating suicide or who have lost a loved one to suicide.
- **The Presbyterian Serious Mental Illness Network of the Presbyterian Health, Education and Welfare Association (PHEWA)** is looking for congregations to join the network and start local chapters.
- **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)**, through its interfaith resource network NAMI FaithNet, seeks to educate and inspire faith communities about mental illness and the vital role spirituality can play in recovery.
- **The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** is a national network of local crisis centers that provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Learn more about how you can locate and help your local crisis center.
- **The Suicide Prevention Resource Center** also has resources especially for faith communities.
- **The Trevor Project** is the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to LGBTQ young people under 25.
- **National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention**
- **American Foundation for Suicide Prevention**

Bullying

The Peacemaking Committee of the Presbytery of Eastern Virginia presented a Seminar on Anti-Bullying at the First Presbyterian Church in Norfolk in 2014. Resources they gathered are on the presbytery’s website.

- **The BULLY Project** is a social action campaign inspired by the award-winning film “BULLY,” building a national movement to end bullying.

- **PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center** actively leads social change to prevent childhood bullying, so that all youth are safe and supported in their schools and communities and online.
- **StopBullying.gov** is a federal government website that provides information from various government agencies on what bullying is, what cyberbullying is, who is at risk and how you can prevent and respond to bullying.

Domestic Violence

Black Mountain Presbyterian Church in North Carolina developed “[A Congregational Domestic Violence Training Plan](#)” using Peace & Global Witness Offering funds from their congregation and from the Presbytery of Western North Carolina.

Congregations can partner with their local women’s shelter or crisis center, providing financial support and volunteers.

- **The Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence Network** of PHEWA is the principal organization within our denomination doing work on domestic violence.
- **Presbyterian Women** also works in the area of gender-based violence.
- **National Domestic Violence Hotline**
- **National Resource Center on Domestic Violence**
- **National Coalition Against Domestic Violence**
- **Futures Without Violence: The National Health Resource Center on Domestic Violence**
- **National Child Abuse Hotline/Childhelp**
- **National Center for Elder Abuse**

Sexual Violence

- **The Presbyterian Child Advocacy Network** of PHEWA is the principal organization within our denomination working on the prevention of child sexual abuse, particularly within our congregations.
- Congregations across the country have partnered with local organizations to organize human trafficking awareness events. For example, First Presbyterian Church in Charleston, WV, partnered with a survivor advocate, a mental health professional and a state trooper for its event “It Happens Right Here: Standing Together Against the Sex Trafficking Industry.”
- **National Human Trafficking Resource Center/ Polaris Project**
- **FaithTrust Institute**
- **National Sexual Assault Hotline**
- **National Dating Abuse Helpline**
- **Break the Cycle**
- **Men Can Stop Rape**
- **Men Stopping Violence**

Gun Violence

- **The Presbyterian Peace Fellowship (PPF)** is leading much of the work within our denomination on gun violence prevention.
- **Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America** is a nonpartisan grassroots movement to mobilize moms, families and everyday Americans to advocate for stronger gun laws. To find a local chapter near you, visit momsdemandaction.org
- **March for Our Lives (MFOL)**, started by students from Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL, is inspiring high school and college students across the country to organize locally for stronger gun legislation. Find a MFOL chapter near you at marchforourlives.com.
- **Everytown for Gun Safety**
- **Coalition to Stop Gun Violence**
- **Stop Handgun Violence**
- **Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence**
- **Prevention Institute**
- **Violence Policy Center**



STUDY AND PREPARATION

Suicides, sexual abuse and gun violence are examples of what have been called “un-natural disasters.” A handbook for pastors and church leaders is now available with step-by-step suggestions and worship resources to use with their faith community during the recovery process. *Recovering from Un-Natural Disasters: A Guide for Pastors and Congregations after Violence and Trauma*, by Laurie Kraus, David Holyan and Bruce Wismer, Westminster John Knox Press, 2017.

Suicide

The 223rd General Assembly (2018) recommended that congregations engage in the work of suicide prevention. It is estimated that 90 percent of suicides are related to undiagnosed and/or untreated mental illness, so a good place to begin one’s study is *Comfort My People: A Policy Statement on Serious Mental Illness*, approved by the 218th General Assembly (2008), which includes a study guide. *Suicide Prevention Competencies for Faith Leaders: Supporting Life Before, During, and After a Suicidal Crisis* is available from the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention. “Teen Suicide: Practicing Prevention and Pastoral Care as the Body of Christ,” by Ashley-Anne Masters, is available online. *The Thoughtful Christian* offers a lesson plan for youth on “Self-Injury: Finding Hope in the Midst of Despair;” an adult study on “Suicide: Prevention and Care,” by Martha Bettis-Gee and Allan Hugh Cole, Jr.; and a resource on “Teens and Cutting,” by Sue Washburn, about what parents and friends can do

about teens who cut themselves intentionally. Two recent books include *The Lifesaving Church: Faith Communities and Suicide Prevention*, by Rachael A. Keefe, Chalice Press, 2018; and *Preventing Suicide: A Handbook for Pastors, Chaplains and Pastoral Counselors*, by Karen Mason, IVP Books, 2014.

Bullying

Several study resources on bullying for youth and adults are available through *The Thoughtful Christian*. In addition, two documentary films on bullying have been produced along with study guides meant particularly for middle schools and high schools:

- ***Bullied: A Student, a School and a Case that Made History*** (40 mins.) chronicles one student's ordeal at the hands of anti-gay bullies and offers an inspiring message of hope to those fighting harassment today. Available from Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center.
- ***BULLY*** (98 mins.) follows five kids and their families over the course of a school year, offering insight into different facets of America's bullying crisis. Available from Amazon. *A Guide to the Film BULLY: Fostering Empathy and Action in Schools* is also available. There is also a companion book, *BULLY: An Action Plan for Teachers, Parents, and Communities to Combat the Bullying Crisis*, edited by Lee Hirsch and Cynthia Lowen with Dina Santorelli, Hachette Books, 2012.

For a younger audience, Susan K. Leigh has written a children's book, ***God, I Need to Talk to You about BULLYING***, Concordia Publishing House, 2005.

Domestic Violence

- **“Turn Mourning into Dancing! A Policy Statement on Healing Domestic Violence and Study Guide,”** approved by the 213th General Assembly (2001), is recommended for study and is available online.
- Since the vast majority of domestic assaults are committed by men against women, men are critical to preventing domestic violence. ***Men in the Mirror: Orienting Our Lives Toward a Christ-Centered Masculinity*** is a 13-session curriculum written by Rev. Dr. Kevin E. Frederick to help men and boys address the issue of violence against women and girls. ***Anguished Hearts*** is a seven-session study on domestic violence that covers different faces of abuse — spouse/partner, child, elder, sibling, dating violence and abuse of vulnerable people.
- ***Broken Vows: Religious Perspectives on Domestic Violence*** is a 59-minute video that includes the stories of six battered women and expert information from Jewish, Roman Catholic and Protestant leaders.

A variety of other helpful resources are available from [Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence](#) and [Presbyterian Women](#).

Sexual Violence

- For Christians, preventing sexual violence needs to begin in our own congregations, making sure that our churches are safe places for children and youth. ***We Won't Let It Happen Here: Creating a Child Safe Church*** is available from the Presbyterian Child Advocacy Network. A simple downloadable brochure, **“Is your church safe?”**, is also available.

Books helpful for examining sexual violence and the church include:

- ***The Gospel, Sexual Abuse and the Church: A Theological Resource for the Local Church, Faith and Order*** Commission of the Church of England, Church House Publishing, 2016.
- ***Sex in the Parish***, by Karen Lebacqz and Ronald G. Barton, Westminster John Knox Press, 1991.
- ***A Toolkit for Action: Modern Slavery*** offers 40 pages of resources on human trafficking.
- ***In Plain Sight*** is a 68-minute documentary film that tells the stories of six female abolitionists fighting against sex trafficking in the U.S. A 31-day devotional and group study guide is also available.
- ***Break the Chain*** is a 70-minute documentary film that chronicles two survivors of human trafficking, providing a detailed look at how trafficking goes unnoticed within our backyards. An educational guide is available.

Gun Violence

- **“Gun Violence, Gospel Values: Mobilizing in Response to God's Call”**, a report approved by the 219th General Assembly (2010). Part of our denomination's response to this report was to produce the 54-minute documentary film, ***Trigger: The Ripple Effect of Gun Violence***, by filmmaker David Barnhart. A screening kit and four-session study and action guide are also available. The Presbyterian Peace Fellowship offers a **Gun Violence Prevention Congregational Toolkit** for free download, which includes resources for study, worship and action.

Two excellent books have been written by the Rev. James E. Atwood:

- ***America and Its Guns: A Theological Exposé***, Cascade Books, 2012.
- ***Gundamentalism and Where It Is Taking America***, Cascade Books, 2017

Three well-researched articles are:

- **“Battleground America: One nation, under the gun,”** by Jill Lepore, *The New Yorker*, April 23, 2012.
- **“How to Reduce Shootings,”** by Nicholas Kristof, *The New York Times*, Feb. 20, 2018.
- **“10 Modest Steps to Cut Gun Violence,”** by Nicholas Kristof, *The New York Times*, May 23, 2018.



DIRECT ACTION AND ADVOCACY

Suicide

The 223rd General Assembly (2018) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) recommended several things that PC(USA) congregations can do to engage in the work of suicide prevention:

- **Participate in the Faith. Hope. Life. campaign**, developed by the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention's Faith Communities Task Force, to involve every faith community in the U.S. in suicide prevention.
- **Offer a Christian education class using "Suicide: Prevention and Care,"** by Martha Bettis-Gee and Allan Hugh Cole, Jr., available from *The Thoughtful Christian*.
- **Start a support group in your congregation for persons living with mental illness and those who love and care for them.**

Bullying

- **Stop bullying on the spot.** When adults respond quickly and consistently to bullying behavior, they send the message that it is not acceptable. Research shows this can stop bullying behavior over time. For simple steps adults can take to stop bullying and keep kids safe, go to stopbullying.gov/respond/on-the-spot/index.html
- **Include bullying as part of your church's Christian education classes for youth and adults, using curriculum available from *The Thoughtful Christian*.**
- **Model love and respect within your church's walls. Teach empathy for others.**

Domestic Violence

The Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence Network has compiled a list of "**Ten Things Your Congregation Can Do About Domestic Violence.**" Among the suggestions:

- **Offer a training for leaders and members of your congregation.** Black Mountain Presbyterian Church in North Carolina offers one possible model: "A Congregational Domestic Violence Training Plan."
- **Print the local domestic violence helpline in your church bulletin at least every month, preferably every week.**
- **Set up a resource table for Domestic Violence Awareness Month (October).**

Sexual Violence

- **Make sure your church is a safe place for children and youth.** Put children/youth safety policies and procedures into place and follow them. *We Won't Let It Happen Here: Creating a Child Safe Church* is available from the Presbyterian Child Advocacy Network.
- **Have your men's group discuss, "Ten Things Men Can Do To Prevent Gender Violence,"** available from the Presbyterian Mission Agency.
- **Teach boys how to be men in ways that don't involve degrading or abusing girls and women.** Use the curriculum *Men in the Mirror: Orienting Our Lives Toward a Christ-Centered Masculinity*.
- **Talk to the youth in your church about healthy dating relationships.**

Gun Violence

- **Offer church members the opportunity to write letters to their state legislators or members of Congress in support of common-sense gun laws such as:**
 - Universal background checks on all gun sales
 - Banning assault weapons and large-capacity magazines
 - Extreme Risk Protection Orders that allow police or family members to petition a state court to order the temporary removal of firearms from a person who may present a danger to themselves or others.

The Presbyterian Peace Fellowship (PPF) offers a gun violence prevention [liturgy](#) that can be used in conjunction with an Offering of Letters.

- **Declare your church a gun-free zone as suggested by the 221st General Assembly (2014) and post "No Guns in God's House" signs available from the PPF.**
- **Join the Be SMART campaign to raise awareness that responsible gun storage — storing guns locked, unloaded and separate from ammunition — can save children's lives.**



COLLECTIVE VIOLENCE — THE U.S. AND GLOBAL SECURITY

Curated by Rev. Roger Powers, St. Andrew Presbyterian Church (Albuquerque, NM)

INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization identifies three broad categories of violence: self-directed violence, interpersonal violence, and collective violence. This section of the Companion Guide will look at the third category — collective violence. Collective violence takes a variety of forms, including armed conflict within or between nation-states, genocide, repression and terrorism. Resources identified in this section are intended to help congregations engage with the Global Security component of the Commitment to Peacemaking, particularly with respect to the United States' role in the world.

The U.S. has had a mixed track record when it comes to its role in global security. On the one hand, it has attempted to promote peace through international cooperation, collective security and economic development by helping to create international organizations such as the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. On the other hand, it has engaged in military intervention more than any other nation, believing that international peace and order depend on the United States being the world's police force, able to project military power anywhere in the world. The U.S. maintains several hundred military bases abroad and spends more on its military than the next seven countries combined. However, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (two of the three longest in U.S. history) have been extremely costly in human and economic terms, and as it is not clear what they have achieved, a majority of Americans (including a majority of veterans from those wars) don't think they were worth fighting. There is a growing recognition among Americans that not all global security problems can be solved through military might.

That, together with the rise of nonviolent "people power" movements, which have proven to be effective in waging conflicts for justice, human rights, and self-determination, is generating new interest in alternatives to violence and war. At the same time, a number of biblical scholars have been lifting up the nonviolent witness they find in the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth and in the practices of the early Church. And they have been looking at the context of the Roman Empire in the first century and the difference that context makes in our reading of the New Testament. All of these developments were taken up by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) during a six-year-long peace discernment process (2010-2016) that engaged congregations,

presbyteries, student groups and academics. The end result was "**Risking Peace in a Violent World: Five New Peacemaking Affirmations**," approved by the 222nd General Assembly (2016).

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in his 1967 "Beyond Vietnam" speech, called the U.S. government "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today." He considered the Vietnam War to be "a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit."

Indeed, violence pervades U.S. history, from the genocide of indigenous peoples to the brutality of chattel slavery to the Revolutionary War to the Civil War to U.S. military involvement in subsequent wars all around the world. Given our blood-stained history, it is little wonder that the United States remains such a violent country today.



WORSHIP

Sermon Suggestions

There are many opportunities through the year when the themes of global security and international peacemaking can be included in worship. Each year the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program provides a variety of resources for the **Season of Peace**, the weeks in September leading up to **World Communion Sunday** (the first Sunday in October) when many congregations receive the **Peace & Global Witness Offering**.

- **Veterans Day (Nov. 11)**, still called Armistice Day in the rest of the world, marked the end of World War I ("the war to end all wars"). While we in the U.S. honor our military veterans on this day, there is no contradiction between that and praying for peace. Veterans know the horrors of war. They want peace as much as any of us do.
- **The Season of Advent**, when we watch and wait for the coming of the Prince of Peace, also lends itself to the theme of international peacemaking, especially in Year A when the lectionary includes visions of peace from the prophet Isaiah (Is. 2:1-5, 11:1-10, 35:1-10).
- **The Sunday before Martin Luther King Jr. Day** is often used to focus on racial justice, but it is also a time to consider Dr. King's prophetic critique of U.S. foreign policy. Read his "**Beyond Vietnam**" speech given at Riverside Church in New York City on April 4, 1967, exactly a year before he was assassinated, as you prepare for this Sunday.

- **Mother's Day** was first conceived by Julia Ward Howe as a time when everyone would rededicate themselves to the task of bringing about world peace. In September 1870, she sent out “[An Appeal to Womanhood Throughout the World](#),” calling for an international gathering of women to consider their roles in stopping war.
- **The Sunday before Memorial Day**, when we remember and honor those who died while serving in the military, is also a time to consider the terrible human cost of war and the need to prevent future wars so that more of our sons and daughters will not have to die in combat.
- **The Sundays closest to Hiroshima Day (Aug. 6) and Nagasaki Day (Aug. 9)** offer opportunities to preach about the threat of nuclear war and the need to reduce and eventually eliminate nuclear weapons from the world.

Hymns from *Glory to God* appropriate for worship services on the themes of global security and international peacemaking include:

- 307 **God of Grace and God of Glory**
 317/318 **In Christ There Is No East or West**
 340 **This Is My Song**
 344 **Where Armies Scourge the Countryside**
 346 **For the Healing of the Nations**
 373 **O Day of Peace**
 378 **We Wait the Peaceful Kingdom**
 756 **O God of Every Nation**
 757 **Today We All Are Called to Be Disciples**
 758 **Why Do Nations Rage Together**

In addition, **Carolyn Winfrey Gillette** has written a number of hymns on the themes of peace and violence.

Prayers

A Prayer to Embrace Jesus' Way of Nonviolence

Loving God, we long for a world at peace, a world free from violence and war, a world free from hunger and poverty, a world free from injustice and oppression. In Jesus Christ, you show us a force more powerful than evil, sin and death. You show us the power of love and truth to bring about personal transformation and social change. Help us to embrace Jesus' way of nonviolence. Stir us from our comfort and complacency. Inspire us with prophetic vision. Instill in us a passion for the possible. Give us courage to speak truth to power. Help us heal the wounds of our broken world.

(by Roger Scott Powers)

A Psalm of Peacemaking

We live in a time of kairos
 when humanity stands on the border
 of a promised time,
 when God's people are summoned to
 obedience and faithfulness
 to preserve God's creation,
 to stand with the poor and oppressed everywhere,
 and to stand together as the people of the earth;
 when with confession and with humility we repent
 of our blindness to the division and war
 in our own hearts and in our own lands,
 our obsession with money and our pursuit of power,
 our irrational belief in security through weaponry,
 and our worship of secular gods.

We are called

to be obedient to Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace,
 who loves the whole world and
 who invites us to be stewards of the
 earth and servants of his people,
 to be co-workers in the new Creation.

Let us be peacemakers.

Let us be called the children of God,
 speaking boldly with moral conviction to
 the nation and to the world,
 building, with God's grace, a new moral
 order in the world community; and
 acting now for world peace, an enterprise
 of justice, an outcome of love.

(from Peacemaking: The Believers' Calling, approved by the 192nd General Assembly (1980))

Other Worship Resources

The Presbyterian Peacemaking Program offers two printed collections of prayers and litanies: *Justice and Peace Shall Kiss: Praying through the Year* and *Sacraments and Seasons: Peacemaking through Worship, III*.



SPIRITUAL GROUNDING AND REFLECTION

The central theme of Jesus' message is the coming of God's kingdom—the coming of God's reign. It is at the core of his preaching and teaching. “Repent, for the kin(g)dom of God is at hand,” Jesus said. “Turn your lives around, for the Reign of God has come near.” Jesus spoke of the Kin(g)dom of God as an alternative social order to that of the Roman Empire.

The Roman Empire was a system of domination that involved economic exploitation, violence, control, oppression and brutality. The Kin(g)dom of God,

on the other hand, is a domination-free order that involves economic justice, nonviolence, freedom, liberation and healing.

Jesus was killed by the Roman Empire, because he challenged the status quo. He threatened the established order. He called for social change. He risked his life for what he believed in. And he paid the ultimate price.

When Jesus was about to be arrested, one of his disciples struck a slave of the high priest with a sword and cut off his right ear. But Jesus said, “No more of this!” And he touched the slave’s ear and healed him. Jesus said: “Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword” (Mt 26:52). The third-century theologian, Tertullian, said that Jesus, “by disarming Peter unbelted every soldier.” Jesus didn’t resort to violence to protect his life or legacy. Instead of taking up the sword, he chose to endure the suffering of the cross with words of forgiveness on his lips, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing” (Lk 23:34).

Of Jesus’ death on the cross, Martin Luther King, Jr., said: “Jesus eloquently affirmed from the cross a higher law. He knew that the old eye-for-an-eye philosophy would leave everyone blind. He did not seek to overcome evil with evil. He overcame evil with good.”

Like Jesus, the early Church stood in opposition to the Roman Empire. Early Christians said: “Christ is our King,” which meant Caesar was not their king! Consequently, for three hundred years Christians were persecuted by the Roman Empire. Some were even martyred for their faith. But the Empire was not able to destroy the Church. Christian churches kept growing throughout the Empire. So, the Roman Empire co-opted the Church instead. Christianity was made the official, established religion of the Empire. Some say this was the worst thing that ever happened to Christianity, because it meant the Church became a tool of empire, blessing imperial ambitions. The change was so dramatic that while in the year 303, it was generally forbidden for Christians to serve in the Roman Army, by the year 416 only Christians were allowed to serve the Roman Army. And for many centuries since, Christians have participated in war in the service of empires.

Early on, Christian theologians developed Just War doctrine, a set of ground rules for going to war under which Christians could be understood to be acting morally. But in practical terms, through history few if any wars have met all of the necessary criteria to be considered “just wars.” Even World War II, which Americans refer to as the “Good War,” did not meet all of the just war criteria. Both sides bombed cities indiscriminately, killing hundreds of thousands of noncombatants, culminating in the U.S. atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

In the past decade or two, biblical scholars and church historians have begun to critique the close relationship the Church has had with empires since the end of the fourth

century. They advocate a return to the life and teachings of the historical Jesus, which were critical of empire. Instead of the Church giving its blessing to systems of domination, exploitation, violence and oppression, they say, the Church ought to be a champion of God’s domination-free order of justice, nonviolence and liberation.

Many Christians are willing to concede that Jesus’ nonviolent ethic might work at the individual level—person-to-person—but they argue that it would not work in social conflicts between groups of people, and certainly not on a national or international scale. But this argument doesn’t hold up given the proven power of nonviolent social movements around the world. Nonviolent struggle has proven to be a powerful means of wielding power in a variety of conflicts. Nonviolent “people power” movements have shown themselves capable of overthrowing dictators, thwarting coups d’état, defending against invasions and occupations, challenging unjust systems, promoting human rights and resisting genocide.

Jesus’ “third way” of nonviolent action may not work in all circumstances, but the historical record shows that it is a powerful means of engaging in conflict and can be used successfully in struggles for justice, human rights and self-determination.

Confessions

The Confession of ’67, which focuses on the theme of reconciliation, includes powerful words about the church’s responsibility to be an advocate for international cooperation and peace and to be a critic of unbridled nationalism:

“9.45 b. God’s reconciliation in Jesus Christ is the ground of the peace, justice, and freedom among nations which all powers of government are called to serve and defend. The church, in its own life, is called to practice the forgiveness of enemies and to commend to the nations as practical politics the search for cooperation and peace. This search requires that the nations pursue fresh and responsible relations across every line of conflict, even at risk to national security, to reduce areas of strife and to broaden international understanding. Reconciliation among nations becomes peculiarly urgent as countries develop nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, diverting human power and resources from constructive uses and risking the annihilation of humankind. Although nations may serve God’s purposes in history, the church which identifies the sovereignty of any one nation or any one way of life with the cause of God denies the Lordship of Christ and betrays its calling.”

Other Resources for Spiritual Grounding and Reflection

- *Resurrection Living: Journeying with the Nonviolent Christ* (A Journal Resource)

This is a journal resource designed to help individuals explore the theology and ethics of nonviolence and ways to practice it in their daily lives. It invites users to

engage in prayerful reflection of Scripture, documents of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and the writings of theologians and practitioners of nonviolence through the ages. The 52 entries may be used individually or in the community on a daily or weekly basis. However the journal may be used, at its heart is an invitation to ponder, “What does it mean for me to follow the nonviolent Christ today in the place where I live and around God’s World?”

- ***Peacemaking Among the Early Followers of Jesus: Is Christianity a Nonviolent Faith?*** (2 sessions)
This adult study is an introduction to the witness to peace and nonviolence found in the New Testament and the writings of the Church Fathers. It is a two-session study that can be easily extended to four or more sessions. The study is included in the 2007 Peacemaking Offering packet.
- ***The Shalom of God in the Midst of Empire*** (6 sessions)
This Bible study reflects on questions that preoccupied the prophet(s) Isaiah long ago and that confront followers of Jesus today: How do we wake up to the ways in which we have been seduced and reduced by empire? How do we move from participating in and being exploited by patterns that are life-denying and constricting to what is the life-giving shalom of God?
- ***Presbyterians and Military Service*** (booklet)
This booklet examines options related to military service in question and answer form. Issues covered range from enlistment procedures related to the draft to an understanding of conscience objections.



COMMUNITY BUILDING AND PARTNERSHIPS

Global security and international peacemaking may seem far removed from the setting of your local congregation. But if you do a little digging, you might be surprised at some of the connections your congregation may already have with the wider world. These connections can help your congregation see the world from different perspectives.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER AS A SESSION, MISSION COMMITTEE OR CONGREGATION

- Are any of your church members immigrants from other countries?
- Are any of your church members veterans who have served overseas?
- Have any of your church members worked in the U.S. Foreign Service?
- Have any of your church members lived and worked in other countries as Presbyterian Mission co-workers, young adult volunteers, Peace Corps volunteers, or with other non-governmental organizations?

- Are any members of your congregation also members of the local World Affairs Council or United Nations Association?
- Does your congregation support a Presbyterian Mission Co-Worker in another country?
- Does your congregation have a mission partnership with a sister church in another country?

In addition to the resources you may find within your own congregation, the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship, and several national peace organizations offer a great deal of other resources and partnering opportunities.

- **The Presbyterian Peacemaking Program** offers a variety of opportunities for individual Presbyterians, congregations and presbyteries to learn about conflicts in countries around the world and to support international peacemaking initiatives.
- **International Peacemakers** are brought to the U.S. every fall by the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program and itinerated among presbyteries, congregations and educational institutions to share about peace and justice issues and peacemaking efforts in their respective countries. Your presbytery or congregation can offer to host an International Peacemaker for three to five days by submitting an application by July 1.
- **Travel Study Seminars** to different parts of the world are also sponsored by the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program to provide Presbyterians with the opportunity to learn firsthand from our partners about efforts for peace, justice and reconciliation in contexts of conflict, injustice and oppression.
- **The Mosaic of Peace Conference** takes Presbyterians to Israel/Palestine every other year (on even years) to meet Palestinians and Israelis; learn from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish peacemakers and walk in the footsteps of the Prince of Peace.
- **The Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations** helps inspire, equip and connect Presbyterians for ministry as faithful disciples of Jesus in the global community. They offer opportunities to advocate for justice for women through the UN Commission on the Status of Women, say NO to child soldiers through the Red Hand Campaign, and get involved in other international peacemaking efforts.
- **The Presbyterian Office of Public Witness**, located in Washington, D.C., is the public policy information and advocacy office of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Its task is to advocate, and help the church to advocate, the social witness perspectives and policies of the Presbyterian General Assembly. Action alerts on legislation coming before Congress concerning U.S. foreign and military policy can be found on their website. The Office of Public

Witness is seeking Presbyterians to organize [Grassroots Advocacy Teams](#) to engage members of their church and community in public policy advocacy.

- **Presbyterian Mission/Partnership Networks** bring together Presbyterians from around the U.S. who share a common mission focus on particular countries. They help to build and maintain healthy partnerships and provide a place for representatives of various PC(USA) partnerships to share information, learn from each other, coordinate their efforts and find ways to have greater impact together as a network. There are currently Presbyterian Mission/Partnership Networks for the following countries: Colombia, Congo, Cuba, Czech Republic, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti, Israel/Palestine, Kenya, Korea, Madagascar, Malawi, Niger, Peru, Russia, Sudan and South Sudan and Syria-Lebanon.
- **PC(USA) Peace Churches** — In response to “Risking Peace in a Violent World: Five New Peacemaking Affirmations,” approved by the 222nd General Assembly (2016), some Presbyterian congregations have deepened their peacemaking witness to reject violence and war and embrace Jesus’ way of nonviolence. After much prayer, study and discernment, they have declared themselves “Peace Churches.” A “Peace Church” is able to affirm the following: “We follow Jesus of Nazareth, the Prince of Peace. We are committed to moving our country and the world beyond war through nonviolent alternatives to conflict. We strive to embody the command to love God and neighbor by following the path of nonviolence, for violence in all of its forms, including war and militarism, has no power to save us.”

Current Peace Churches include:

- [First Presbyterian Church Palo Alto](#)
- [Church of Reconciliation \(Chapel Hill, NC\)](#)
- [Montclair Presbyterian Church \(Oakland, CA\)](#)

For more information about becoming a “Peace Church,” see the following:

- **“The Case for Peace Churches: My Path to Conscientious Objection,”** by Chris Iyer, Unbound, May 31, 2019.
- **“What It Means to Become a Peace Church,”** by Ben Daniel, Sojourners, March 13, 2019.
- **“How to Become a Peace Church: Rev. Ben Daniel interviewed by Rev. Emily Brewer”** (video)
The [Presbyterian Peace Fellowship](#) brings together Presbyterians who oppose all war and who believe that gospel nonviolence is the only stance consistent with Christian discipleship. It works closely with the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, but as an independent nonprofit organization, it is able to push the denomination to new and bolder policies and actions on behalf of peace. It has offered a consistent nonviolent witness for 75 years, from supporting Presbyterian conscientious objectors during World War II to promoting nonviolent direct action in situations of conflict today.

Other Potential Partners working on International Peacemaking

- **Veterans for Peace** is a global organization of military veterans and allies whose collective efforts are to build a culture of peace by using their experiences and lifting their voices. The organization works to inform the public of the true causes of war and the enormous costs of wars, with an obligation to heal the wounds of wars.
- **Christian Peacemaker Teams** places teams at the invitation of local peacemaking communities that are confronting situations of lethal conflict. These teams support and amplify the voices of local peacemakers who risk injury and death by waging nonviolent direct action to confront systems of violence and oppression.
- **Witness for Peace** is a politically independent, nationwide grassroots organization of people committed to nonviolence and led by faith and conscience. Witness for Peace’s mission is to support peace, justice and sustainable economies in the Americas by changing U.S. policies and corporate practices that contribute to poverty and oppression in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- **Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service** works to foster justice, peace and the well-being of all through education, resources and action for nonviolent change. Pace e Bene has led trainings around the world, created resources for change and organized many campaigns and movements for nonviolence. “Pace e Bene” (pronounced “pah-chay bay-nay”) is an Italian greeting from St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi meaning “Peace and all Good.”
- **American Friends Service Committee** is a Quaker organization that promotes lasting peace with justice, as a practical expression of faith in action. Drawing on continuing spiritual insights and working with people of many backgrounds, ASFC nurtures the seeds of change and respect for human life that transform social relations and systems.
- **Fellowship of Reconciliation USA** is a part of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation’s (IFOR) global peace network, which addresses crisis-level civil and human rights issues through nonviolent activism, advocacy, education and the empowering of individuals and local communities at the grassroots level.
- **International Center on Nonviolent Conflict** focuses on how civil resistance movements can be effective and create change in our society. The organization develops and shares knowledge and resources on civil resistance with interested recipients throughout the world. This includes activists, scholars, educators, nongovernmental organizations, media professionals and members of the policy community.
- **Interfaith Network on Drone Warfare** is a coalition of faith-based organizations working to raise awareness about the moral concerns and consequences of the U.S. government’s increasing use of drone warfare. The Working Group holds monthly meetings in Washington, D.C. to share news and information and

to strategize about how to bring this issue to the forefront of the agenda for policymakers on Capitol Hill and in the White House.



STUDY AND PREPARATION

General Assemblies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) have adopted many excellent policy statements, resolutions and study documents on matters of global security and international peacemaking, which are good places to begin one's study. Some have study guides, and all are available for free download.

- ***Peacemaking: The Believers' Calling***, approved by the 192nd General Assembly (1980), the foundational document that first called for a churchwide emphasis on peacemaking
- ***Christian Obedience in a Nuclear Age***, adopted by the 200th General Assembly (1988)
- ***Resolution on Just Peacemaking and the Call for International Intervention for Humanitarian Rescue***, approved by the 210th General Assembly (1998)
- ***Resolution on Violence, Religion, and Terrorism***, approved by the 216th General Assembly (2004)
- ***Drones, War and Surveillance***, approved by the 2014 General Assembly (2014)
- ***Risking Peace in a Violent World: Five New Peacemaking Affirmations***, approved by the 222nd General Assembly (2016). A companion book and study guide are also available: ***Five Risks Presbyterians Must Take for Peace: Renewing the Commitment to Peacemaking in the PC(USA)***, by Christian Iosso, Westminster John Knox Press, 2017, and ***"Risking Peace": A Companion Study Guide*** (5-6 sessions), by Dee Koza.
- ***Resolution on Seeking God's Peace Through Nuclear Disarmament in the 21st Century***, approved by the 223rd General Assembly (2018)

Books

In addition to study resources from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), see the following books:

On Christianity and Empire

- ***Saving Paradise: How Christianity Traded Love of This World for Crucifixion and Empire***, by Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker, Beacon Press, 2008.
- ***In the Shadow of Empire: Reclaiming the Bible as a History of Faithful Resistance***, edited by Richard A. Horsley, Westminster John Knox Press, 2008.
- ***God and Empire: Jesus Against Rome, Then and Now***, by John Dominic Crossan, HarperCollins, 2007.
- ***Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Order***, by Richard A. Horsley, Augsburg Fortress Press, 2003.

On Violence in the Bible

- ***How to Read the Bible and Still Be a Christian: Struggling with Divine Violence from Genesis Through Revelation***, by John Dominic Crossan, HarperCollins, 2015.
- ***The Violence of Scripture: Overcoming the Old Testament's Troubling Legacy***, by Eric A. Seibert, Fortress Press, 2012.
- ***Love, Violence, and the Cross: How the Nonviolent God Saves Us Through the Cross of Christ***, by Gregory Anderson Love, Cascade Books, 2010.
- ***Ain't Gonna Study War No More: Biblical Ambiguity and the Abolition of War***, by Albert Curry Winn, Westminster John Knox Press, 1993.

On War and Peace

- ***War and the American Difference: Theological Reflections on Violence and National Identity***, by Stanley Hauerwas, Baker Academic, 2013.
- ***Soul Repair: Recovery from Moral Injury After War***, by Rita Nakashima-Brock and Gabriella Lettini, Beacon Press, 2012.
- ***Just Peacemaking: The New Paradigm for the Ethics of Peace and War***, edited by Glen H. Stassen, Pilgrim Press, 2008.
- ***War and Christian Ethics: Classic and Contemporary Readings on the Morality of War***, edited by Arthur F. Holmes, Baker Academic, 2005.
- ***Must Christianity Be Violent? Reflections on History, Practice, and Theology***, edited by Kenneth R. Chase and Alan Jacobs, Brazos Press, 2003.
- ***War in the Twentieth Century: Sources in Theological Ethics***, edited by Richard B. Miller, Westminster John Knox Press, 1992.
- ***Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace: A Historical Survey and Critical Re-evaluation***, by Roland H. Bainton, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960.

On Nonviolent Action

- ***Nonviolent Action: What Christian Ethics Demands but Most Christians Have Never Really Tried***, by Ronald J. Sider, Brazos Press, 2015.
- ***From Dictatorship to Democracy: A Conceptual Framework for Liberation***, by Gene Sharp, New Press, 2012.
- ***What about Hitler? Wrestling with Jesus's Call to Nonviolence in an Evil World***, by Robert W. Brimlow, Brazos Press, 2006.
- ***Jesus and Nonviolence: A Third Way***, by Walter Wink, Fortress Press, 2003.
- ***A Force More Powerful: A Century of Nonviolent Conflict***, by Peter Ackerman and Jack DuVall, St. Martin's Press, 2000. (Also a six-part documentary film with the same title.)
- ***The Powers That Be: Theology for a New Millennium***, by Walter Wink, Galilee/Doubleday, 1998.



DIRECT ACTION AND ADVOCACY

- **Organize a Grassroots Advocacy Team** in your congregation to engage in public policy advocacy regarding issues of U.S. foreign and military policy. The members of an advocacy team commit themselves to being in relationship with one another, with their members of Congress, and with the PC(USA) Office of Public Witness for at least a year. The Office of Public Witness supports advocacy teams with action alerts, team building and organizing resources and issue briefs throughout the year.
- **Host an International Peacemaker** together with other congregations in your presbytery. Every fall the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program brings leaders from partner denominations and organizations around the world to visit presbyteries, congregations and educational institutions and share about peace and justice issues and peacemaking efforts in their respective countries. These visits have informed Presbyterians, opened hearts and minds, touched lives, established relationships and inspired new ministries. Applications are due each year by July 1.
- **Support Active-Duty Soldiers, Veterans and their Families** with cards, letters and care packages. Give special care to military families while their loved ones are deployed overseas and after they return home. Deployments put enormous stress on soldiers and on the spouses and children they leave behind. Veterans need the love and care of congregations who will welcome them home and listen to them with wisdom. The church has a special responsibility to help heal the moral and spiritual wounds of its sons and daughters who have been scarred by war. Resources for congregations are available from Presbyterians Caring for Chaplains and Military Personnel (PCCMP).
- **Help Youth Think Through Their Views on War and Peace** — Help the youth in your congregation to examine their own consciences and to work through the ethical arguments for serving in the military versus declaring oneself a conscientious objector to war. Young people are presented with these important decisions early in their lives. We fail them if we do not equip them to make these decisions faithfully and wisely. The booklet *Presbyterians and Military Service* is available online. The Center on Conscience and War also has educational resources.
- **Support Nonviolent Accompaniment** — Since 2004, the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship (PPF), in partnership with PC(USA) World Mission, has been sending pairs of international companions to Colombia at the invitation of the Presbyterian Church of Colombia to provide a measure of safety—international eyes—for their work in the midst of violence. In 2019, PPF answered another call for international accompaniment from CAME (Centro de Atención al Migrante Exodus) in Agua Prieta on the U.S.-Mexico border, whose staff and volunteers have been subject to threats and intimidation from the local cartel. Persons interested in accompaniment are invited to attend a long weekend of training and discernment in the U.S. PPF Learn & Discern events are held twice a year.
- **Join the Presbyterian Red Hand Campaign to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers** — May 25, 2020, will mark the 20th anniversary of the UN General Assembly's adoption of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, which the U.S. Senate has yet to ratify. Still, tens of thousands of children continue to be recruited and used as soldiers in armed conflicts around the world. The Red Hand Campaign is a great intergenerational peacemaking activity for families and congregations. Just put red paint on your hand, press your hand onto a piece of paper, let it dry, add your name, city, and message, and send it to national and international decision makers to pressure them to support the campaign to end the use of children as soldiers.
- **Help Organize the Faith Community to Stop Drone Warfare** — The Interfaith Network on Drone Warfare is a coalition of faith-based organizations working to raise awareness about the moral concerns and consequences of the U.S. government's increasing use of drone warfare. They have produced five half-hour videos, with military, legal, human rights, policy and faith leaders discussing the moral, policy and religious dimensions of this new and troubling development in modern warfare. Study guides accompany the videos. They can be streamed from their website free of charge.



RACISM

Curated by Denise Anderson, *Coordinator for Racial and Intercultural Justice*

INTRODUCTION

Do We Know What We're Up Against?

For many of us, the word “racism” conjures images of people in sheets and hoods burning crosses. We may think of recent images of young white men in collared shirts wielding torches and proclaiming that they will not be replaced. The word evokes the worst of what we have been. We have a way of connecting it to elements of our past or a few rogue individuals of the present who refuse to let go of old sentiments. However, it's much more than that.

In his book, *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality* in America, sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva points out that racism isn't merely an “ideological or attitudinal phenomenon,” but is instead “a network of social relations at social, political, economic, and ideological levels that shapes the life chances of the various races.” This moves us beyond an understanding of racism as the moral deficiency of a few bad actors. It is a problem for all of us, propped up by structures that go beyond individuals.

Racism is not primarily about individual prejudice or an individual's beliefs and attitudes. Rather, racism in the U.S. is a socially constructed system. Some people are advantaged, and others are disadvantaged, merely because of their skin color, ethnic identity or their ancestral background. Social power and prejudice have combined to treat people differently, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Some people are privileged while others are oppressed. As a consequence, there is unequal and inequitable access to resources such as money, education, information and decision-making power.

If we are to dismantle something as pernicious as racism, we need to be honest and clear about what it is. That will include being honest about how we participate — even unknowingly — in its perpetuation. Do we shy away from difficult conversations that we're not used to having, even though they might produce healing and liberation for our siblings? Is our moral witness absent in the face of the oppression of people of color? When we do act, do our missional endeavors prop us up as saviors, or do they position us as partners?

King wrote that “In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.” Racism is an evil that we “good church folk” must confront, both in the larger culture and in our own structures. As he asked the man at the pool of Bethesda, I believe Jesus continues to ask his church if we want to be made well. Racism has long made us ill and kept us bound, but there comes a time when we must take up our mat and walk — even when we don't think we can.



WORSHIP

Call to Worship

One: The Lord supports the cause of the needy, *Ps. 140:12*

Many: and gives justice to those who are poor.

One: Will God not grant justice *Luke 18:7*
to those who cry day and night?

Many: God will not delay in helping them.

One: God has given us the ministry *2 Cor. 5:18–20*
of reconciliation.

Many: Through Jesus Christ let us be reconciled to God.

All: Let us worship God!

Statement of Faith:

God has created the peoples of the earth to be one universal family. In his reconciling love, God overcomes the barriers between sisters and brothers and breaks down every form of discrimination based on racial or ethnic difference, real or imaginary. The church is called to bring all people to receive and uphold one another as persons in all relationships of life: in employment, housing, education, leisure, marriage, family, church, and the exercise of political rights. Therefore, the church labors for the abolition of all racial discrimination and ministers to those injured by it. Congregations, individuals, or groups of Christians who exclude, dominate, or patronize others, however subtly, resist the Spirit of God and bring contempt on the faith which they profess.

—*The Confession of 1967*

Prayer of Confession:

One: God of all creation, you made humans in your image and blessed us so that we would be a blessing.

All: Instead, we have perverted that blessing and claimed it only for some.

One: You called us to remember you as the God who brought your people out of slavery.

All: Instead, we have attempted to forget the past rather than reckon with it, creating race-neutral policies in our deeply racialized world and wondering why nothing seems to change.

One: You commanded us to have no other gods before you.

All: Instead, we have made whiteness into an idol, bowing down and worshipping it as our national standard—normal, central, uniquely desirable. In doing so we have separated ourselves from one another and from the God who created each of us just a little lower than the angels and called us all good.

One: You bid us not to murder.

ALL: Instead, we have benefited from systems that dehumanize us, strip us of our heritage, our being and maybe even our life.

One: You told us not to steal.

ALL: Instead, we participate in institutions that continue to reap the profits of exploitation, genocide, displacement and slavery.

One: You said, “Do not bear false witness against your neighbor.”

ALL: Instead, we have bought into divide-and-conquer politics that keep us from seeing the connections between modes of oppression. We have shown up only for “our people.” In fear of saying something wrong, we have chosen silence over solidarity.

3 Voices: Among us we have sinned on these things in different ways, but we cannot dismiss our complicity.

ALL: We have done these things. We have watched others do these things. We have benefited from them. We have ignored them when they didn't impact us. We have made this path together. Can we unmake it together?

— *From the Monday evening liturgy at DisGrace at Montreat*

Sermon Ideas

Genesis 11

The story of the Tower of Babel is an etiology meant to explain why humans have different languages and social locations. This text has been used to justify some of the most oppressive policy in human history—apartheid, segregation, Jim Crow, immigration bans, etc. But notice the text never tells us what God feels at the sight of what the humans had accomplished, only how God reacted. How we believe God feels (angry, intimidated, alarmed) has implications on what we believe about human diversity. The preacher may want to trouble the waters of our common reading of this text and challenge what we have been reading into it.

Mark 10:17-22

This text can potentially help the hearer unpack the notion of privilege. We all have privilege in some way, and in the case of the young man who comes to Jesus with an important question, his privilege was economic. In calling the man to sell his goods for the sake of the poor, Jesus was calling him to become one of them. We're not just called to be good people, and we're not just called to be good to people—we're called to be each other's people, to be one—truly one—with one another in meaningful ways, including ways that challenge our own comfort. What might be keeping God's people from being each other's people?

Luke 10:25-37

The parable of the Samaritan neighbor (also known as “The Good Samaritan”) both casts a marginalized

person as the hero of the story and presents a picture of intercultural compassion and cooperation. In doing so, it confronts a teacher of the law and his apparent need to justify himself and excuse himself from being neighborly to another human being. How often do we seek to justify our indifference toward human oppression by distancing ourselves from the oppressed? What might Jesus have to say about that?

Hymns

Glory to God Hymnal

- 339 Lift Every Voice and Sing
- 346 For the Healing of the Nations
- 372 O For a World
- 379 We Shall Overcome
- 454 Take the Saving Word of God/
Dawk-yah Towgyah Thawy Baht Awm
- 756 O God of Every Nation
- 761 Called as Partners in Christ's Service
- 768 Somos el Cuerpo de Cristo/
We Are the Body of Christ
- 769 For Everyone Born
- 770 I'm Gonna Eat at the Welcome Table
- 853 We Are Marching in the Light of God/Siyahamba



SPIRITUAL GROUNDING AND REFLECTION

It is important that Presbyterians know that our denomination has a churchwide antiracism policy which guides our efforts toward equity, inclusion, and justice. That policy, *Facing Racism: A Vision of the Intercultural Community*, was adopted at the 222nd General Assembly (2016) and offers this undergirding for antiracism work in the PC(U.S.A.):

As followers of Jesus Christ, we stand against racism in all its myriad forms. As Presbyterians, we have specific resources in our tradition that can be useful in turning away from racism and towards the diversity and justice that God desires. In particular, we have received wisdom regarding sin, confession, and repentance.

Reformed theology offers a nuanced understanding of sin. Calvin did not understand sin to be simply an individual belief, action, or moral failing (Calvin, 1960). Rather, he viewed sin as the corporate state of all humanity. It is an infection that taints each of us and all of us. No part of us—not our perception, intelligence, nor conscience—is unclouded by sin. This does not mean that human beings are awful. Rather, it means that we must have humility about our own righteousness, and that we must cling to the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Nineteenth century theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher reiterates the corporate and communal nature of sin. He writes that sin is “in each the work of all and in all the work of each” (Schleiermacher, 288). He uses the terms “original

sin” and “actual sin” to explain. The sinful actions and beliefs of each person (actual sin) contribute to communal ways of being that are in opposition to God (original sin). As people are born and raised in the context of original sin, they begin to commit actual sin, and the cycle continues. These old-fashioned terms can be helpful in understanding contemporary problems, including racism. Bigoted beliefs, hate crimes, prejudice, and intentional discrimination are all actual sin. They stem from, and contribute to, the original sin of systemic racism that permeates our culture and society. The actual sins of past generations—such as slavery, the Indian Removal Act, the Chinese Exclusion Act, the colonization of Hawaii and Guam, the Immigration Act of 1924, and so on—become the original sin in which we live.

This is manifested in severe inequality in education, wealth, income, and opportunity. For example, consider a white man returning from Army service in 1945. The G.I. Bill offered him college tuition and a low-interest mortgage, potentially on land taken from Native Americans by force or coercion. A black man returning from an equal length of Army service did not receive the same benefits due to racism in the administration of the G.I. Bill and widespread discrimination in housing. In 2015, the white man’s descendants have the benefits of inherited wealth (home equity) and increased education, while the black man’s grandchildren do not. No one today needs to commit an actual sin for this inequality to continue. Original sin does not need our intentional consent to thrive. Silence and inaction are enough.

This nuanced concept of sin can be particularly useful in understanding how people of goodwill who do not harbor prejudice or intend bigotry are still participants in original sin. White people in the United States of America continue collectively to reap the benefits of white supremacy, even when they individually believe in the equality of all people. Our theological heritage regarding sin makes it possible for Presbyterians to acknowledge the complex realities of racism instead of moving to defend an illusion of individual innocence. The second valuable resource from our tradition is the importance of confession and repentance. Acknowledging our sinfulness ought not to produce self-hatred or paralyzing guilt. Rather, the appropriate response is to confess our sin before God and one another, confident in the grace and love of God. The grace that enables us to confess also empowers us to repent, that is, to turn and walk the other way, towards the eschatological vision of God’s new creation. By grace we are forgiven, and we respond to this grace with gratitude, humility, and renewed zeal for the Gospel.

Finally, as Presbyterians we know something about work. While aspects of the Protestant work ethic may be problematic, to the degree that it signifies our determination, persistence, and stubborn strength, we embrace it in this regard: we commit ourselves to DO THE WORK of countering racism in our witness to the Gospel. In our affirmation that God loves difference, we will honor diversity

as a good in which God delights. In our conviction that God desires justice, we will learn from others to broaden our understanding of equality. In our humility as sinful people, we will listen openly to diverse voices regarding how racism functions in our society. In our gratitude for God’s grace, we will turn again and again towards the vision of whole community found in the Word of God. In our joyous response to God’s love, we will love one another.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER AS A SESSION, MISSION COMMITTEE OR CONGREGATION

Here are some questions to use in small groups to reflect on this policy:

1. The Bible has often been used to support racism. What are some ways our congregation has heard or seen this happen?
2. How can our church community counter racist interpretations of the Bible?
3. In what ways have members of our congregation experienced racism directly or indirectly in their lives? Consider inviting members to share about their experiences as they feel comfortable. Keep in mind of the sensitivity of the subject as it relates to one’s past hurt and pain.
4. Through your observation and/or experience, how do you think the church has handled racism in society and in the church?
5. What are some obstacles and stumbling blocks that we must overcome in order to move toward a more loving and accepting community?
6. What would it mean for our congregation and the church as a whole to be both united and diverse?
7. If you overheard a discriminating comment or racially insensitive joke being made by one of your friends or someone in church or at work, what would you do?
8. How does racism play a role in the structures of our community, including business, education, and policing?
9. What is one small step our church can take in order to eradicate racism in church and society?



COMMUNITY BUILDING AND PARTNERSHIPS

PC(USA) Networks

Presbyterian Intercultural Network

Presbyterians are encouraged to connect with the [Presbyterian Intercultural Network \(PIN\)](#). The Presbyterian Intercultural Network (PIN) is a grassroots network in our denomination that connects and nurtures intercultural, multicultural, and cross-cultural ministries all over the United States. Learn more about PIN, including how you can bring a chapter to your location on their website.

Ecumenical Partnerships

A word on ecumenical cooperation from the *Facing Racism: A Vision of the Intercultural Community* Churchwide Antiracism Policy:

Systemic racism does not persist just because of the action of people of ill will. A contributing factor is the inaction of people of goodwill. The Formula of Agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Reformed Church in America, the United Church of Christ, and the PC(USA) presents an opportunity to enhance the effectiveness of racial justice work through mutual support, planning, resource development, and coordination. The cooperative work of churches helped move the nation forward in the sixties and seventies. The struggle against racism in this new era will require churches to work in more coordinated and effective ways. Appropriate staff members of the above denominations have held several meetings. This work must continue with renewed vigor. The goal is to find ways of developing a more unified and coordinated approach to the struggle for racial justice and move toward the development of joint resources and mutually compatible training for antiracism ministry.

Community Organizing

Our churchwide antiracism policy suggests that “those working with local congregations, including staff, need to be trained in both antiracism work and community organizing.”

Opportunities for community organizing training:

Certificate in Community Organizing and Congregational Leadership — NEXT Church, Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary, and Metro Industrial Areas Foundation team up annually to offer a Certificate in Community Organizing and Congregational Leadership. The training provides (1) an introduction to the universals of community organizing through examples of their implementation in ministry and community contexts and (2) a theological foundation and reflection on organizing universals and public faith leadership as well as congregational development. This training will articulate a theological vision of ministry that emphasizes leadership development and the role of the church in the current political and cultural moment to help pastors and church leaders navigate the significant cultural changes we confront in the 21st century.

Industrial Areas Foundation — These extensive trainings are for key clergy, staff and laity of member congregations as well as the staff, board and members of nonprofit organizations who are members of or who are building broad-based IAF organizations



STUDY AND PREPARATION

Facing Racism: A Vision of the Intercultural Community Antiracism Study Guides (2016)

This series of six antiracism study guides is appropriate for an hour-long conversation among adults or teens. They provide a pedagogical tool for empowering church communities to have important conversations about race and racism in relation to Christian faith. The study guides are based on topics and concepts covered in the churchwide antiracism policy “[Facing Racism: A Vision of the Intercultural Community](#).” The topics of the six guides are:

1. **Biblical Imperatives to Antiracism**
2. **Envisioning a New Way of Life Together**
3. **PC(USA) and Racial Reconciliation**
4. **Racism 101**
5. **Enduring Legacy of Racism in the U.S.**
6. **Responding as a Community of Faith**

This training tool includes a list of antiracism resources for congregations or presbyteries desiring further information.

What follows is the first study guide to help acquaint you with the resource:

Study Guide #1: Biblical Imperatives to Antiracism

The Bible provides a firm foundation and compelling imperative to engage in antiracist work. There are *at least four different biblical themes* that can ground and motivate antiracism. While we will read some selected texts, it is important to recognize that these themes are not confined to isolated verses. Rather, they are woven throughout the biblical witness.

Creation (Genesis 1:1-31; Psalm 104)

We are all part of God’s intricate and amazing creation. We did not bring ourselves into being, rather we receive our existence as a gift from God. Our lives are interwoven with all of creation, including the stars, planets, oceans, animals, trees and plants around us. We are all part of creation that God has made and declared good. God created all the cosmos in an intricate, interwoven system of life. When humanity elevates one group over another, or falsely declares particular groups less good than others, we usurp God’s place as creator of all that is. We deny our interrelation and proclaim our judgment more powerful than God’s.

Image of God (Genesis 1:26)

“Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness.” Humanity is made in the image of God. The 1999 PC(USA) Policy Statement on Antiracism ([Facing Racism: A Vision of the Beloved Community](#)), builds upon the image of God in all human persons as fundamental to the rejection of racism. While humans have many differences, we are all children of God,

made in the image of God, and therefore of equal worth, value and dignity. The 1999 Statement calls us to a vision of humanity without racism that is “grounded in our common origin as children of God from which we derive our inalienable worth, dignity, and sanctity.” All humans are made in the image of God. It is therefore falsehood and deception to deny the full humanity of any group of people.

God loves diversity (Acts 10:9-23)

While focusing on the image of God emphasizes how all human persons are fundamentally the same, the differences between persons are also valuable. The Bible portrays God as delighting in the variety in creation (see Job 38-41). In the New Testament, the God of Jesus Christ offers grace to all people, regardless of their social group or status. Jesus spoke with and honored all those he encountered, including respectable Jewish men, women, tax collectors, prostitutes, lepers, Samaritans and Canaanites. The book of Acts recounts the momentous decision to proclaim the gospel to the gentiles, who were at the time considered unclean by the Jewish followers of Jesus. Peter’s initial hesitation to have anything to do with gentiles is overcome by a series of visions in which God tells him, “What God has made clean, you must not call profane.” Once convinced, Peter tells others, “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him” (Acts 10:34). People do not have to all be the same in order to be loved by God. There is room in God’s grace for vast differences. And the grace of God does not erase differences, but rather invites unity among them. When the Spirit came upon the people at Pentecost, each person present could hear the believers speaking in his or her native language (Acts 2:1-11). God did not provide a new language that erased all native tongues. Rather, God created understanding within the diversity of languages present. God loves variety and diversity. The grace of God is not contained within particular human groups, nor does God’s grace erase our differences. Racism falsely proclaims that difference is negative, rather than evidence of God’s abundant creativity.

God loves justice (Jeremiah 9:23-24)

Another biblical theme that compels us to antiracism work is God’s delight in justice. The prophets of the Hebrew Bible continually proclaim God’s care for those who are oppressed and God’s demand for just action. Jeremiah says that God “delights” in justice (Jer. 9:24). In Amos, the LORD calls for the people to “establish justice in the gate” and “let justice roll down like waters” (Amos 5:15, 5:24). The prophet Micah states that what the LORD requires is “to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8). God delights in justice. Racism, as systemic inequality, is fundamentally unjust and therefore against the will of God.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER AS A SESSION, MISSION COMMITTEE OR CONGREGATION

1. Which of these four biblical foundations for antiracism work (creation, image of God, diversity, and justice) speaks most powerfully to you? Why?
2. The Bible has often been used to support racism. What are some ways you have heard or seen this happen?
3. How can our church community counter racist interpretations of the Bible?

Other Study Guides

Bias Cleanse

[Look Different.org](http://LookDifferent.org), in partnership with the [Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity](http://KirwanInstitute.org) and MTV, has created seven-day courses or “bias cleanses” on race, gender and anti-LGBTQ bias which provide daily tasks to help you begin to change your associations.

Engaging Belhar

The Confession of Belhar was written as a protest against a heretical theological stance by the white Dutch Reformed Church that used the Bible and the Confessions to justify the harsh and unjust system of Apartheid. The Office of the General Assembly provides study resources on the Belhar Confession including videos, podcasts, workshops, designs and worship resources.

Race, Reconciliation and Reformation Bible Study

with Dr. Eric Barreto, Big Tent 2017

The study begins with the book of Acts, with a focus on Pentecost, the Ethiopian Eunuch, Peter and Cornelius, with a brief dive into Luke. The study includes questions asking when each of us became cognizant of our own race or the race of people different from ourselves. The study was led at the PC(USA)’s Big Tent Gathering in 2017, by Eric D. Barreto, Weyerhaeuser, Associate Professor of New Testament at Princeton Theological Seminary and author of *Ethnic Negotiations: The Function of Race and Ethnicity in Acts 16* (Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

Shifting Accountability for Racial Ethnic Ministries in the PC(USA) from Variety to Equity

This study guide is meant to help Presbyterians engage in conversations to end structural racism and move toward racial equity in the church and in our society. The guide comes from an action of the 222nd General Assembly (2016) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in response to the report of the Churchwide Conversation on Race, Ethnicity, Racism and Ethnocentricity.

Becoming the Beloved Community Antiracism Packet

This packet from Presbyterian Women of the PC(USA) is designed to help individuals and groups engage the issue of racism, both individually and collectively. This packet is designed with growth in mind. It includes tools for understanding and dismantling racism, as well as PW's award-winning *Becoming the Beloved Community* DVD, articles from *The Thoughtful Christian's* study pack, and other resources. A version of this packet is available without the DVD, for those who have already purchased the DVD.

PC(USA) Policy and Resources

Facing Racism: A Vision of the Intercultural Community (2016)

PC(USA) Resources on Racism

In addition to the 2016 policy itself, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shares a wealth of antiracism resources — including studies, books and training — to equip the greater church to work against racism.

Books

Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America by Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (5th Edition, Rowman & Littlefield (2003)

White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism by Robin DiAngelo (Beacon Press, 2018)

So You Want to Talk About Race by Ijeoma Oluo (Seal Press, 2018)

Dear Church: A Love Letter From a Black Preacher to the Whitest Denomination in the U.S. by Lenny Duncan (Augsburg Books, 2019)



DIRECT ACTION AND ADVOCACY

There are myriad strategies for making antiracism an integral part of the life of individuals and communities. Because structural racism can show up in multiple ways, there are many things we can do to confront it.

1. **Housing discrimination** limits where people of color can live and steers them to rental markets rather than home ownership. Engage your church community in looking at housing discrimination and de facto segregation in your community. Study [U.S. Census data](#) and who lives where. Identify local partners who are already engaged in the fight against housing discrimination and discuss ways to come alongside them.
2. **Laws and policies** often deny people of color access to quality education, employment and adequate health care. Sign up for [Action Alerts](#) from the Office of Public Witness to advocate to U.S. members of Congress on these issues.
3. **Food apartheid** — the perpetuation of areas deliberately devoid of quality, affordable fresh food—targets communities of color. Identify the food deserts in your community using this [map](#) from the United States Department of Agriculture's Food Access Research Atlas. Notice the correlations between food deserts and low-income areas, where there are often concentrations of people of color. Petition your local government for equitable access to fresh food. The [Presbyterian Hunger Program](#) offers food justice resources for congregations.
4. **Mass incarceration and criminal justice systems** disproportionately target people of color with lengthier sentences, “stop-and-frisk” laws, the over-policing of communities of color, the school-to-prison pipeline, etc. Does your church or community have a prison ministry? Is there an advocacy component to it? Does it ask why the U.S. accounts for 5% of the world's total population and 25% of the world's prison population? Are they confronting for-profit prisons that thrive off the feeding of poor people and people of color into prisons? How might your congregation deepen its prison ministry (and all its ministries) to address root causes and inequitable practices of mass incarceration? One suggestion is to get involved with [The Bail Project](#), an organization that the PC(USA) has partnered with to combat mass incarceration at the front end of the criminal justice system. The Bail Project pays bail for people in need, reuniting families and restoring the presumption of innocence. There are also opportunities to advocate to end the discriminatory cash bail system.

5. **Environmental racism** is exemplified by the dumping of hazardous waste, inadequate infrastructure and lack of access to clean water that all result in a range of serious health problems in communities of color. What local coalitions are addressing environmental racism, and how can your church accompany and support their work? How can conversations on eco-justice (justice for the planet) include environmental justice (justice for the inhabitants of the earth)? Your congregation might consider attending community meetings about proposed siting/development projects. Pay attention to: the demographics of the community, the actual or potential impact on the community's environment and health, the degree to which the affected community was meaningfully involved in the decision-making process, and what benefits and burdens direct and indirect) will result from the proposed action (who benefits, who bears the burden.) Your congregation might also write letters to members of Congress to advocate for policies that place tighter controls and stricter penalties on polluting companies and facilities. Demand that those companies be forced to show conclusive evidence that their processes and products are not causing damage to the people and land immediately surrounding their facilities. Your congregation could also write letters to ask for better regulation and enforcement of policies and laws by EPA and more funding for the branches that work on environmental justice.
6. **Educational racism** includes the underfunding of schools that serve communities of color and disproportionate disciplinary actions for students of color. Churches need to be present at school board meetings and paying attention to disciplinary data and practices in their community school systems. Sometimes the most powerful thing we can do as faith communities is let people know we are watching. Such action could prove to be a powerful advocacy component to services churches already render to communities, such as after-school tutoring, school supply donations and even Vacation Bible School. This advocacy is part of the [PC\(USA\)'s Educate a Child Initiative](#), which is aimed at improving the quality of education for 1 million children in the U.S. and worldwide through strengthening early childhood education and reducing the dropout rate of adolescents. Your congregation can follow the Initiative's guidance outlined in "[School Board Advocacy 101](#)," which describes strategies for effective advocacy with a school board and community organizing.



CLIMATE CHANGE

Curated by Rebecca Barnes and Jessica Maudlin,
Presbyterian Hunger Program



Making peace with the earth and peacemaking go hand in hand. Having clean air and water, adequate green spaces and access to nature helps children's emotional, physical and spiritual growth. As we care for God's earth and combat climate change, people and whole communities will be able to pursue the pathways of peace.

INTRODUCTION

As people of faith, we believe that God created this world, called it good and told humans to care for it. We are blessed to have this sacred task. Creating peace on earth and creating peace with the earth are connected.

Our daily experience confirms that these extreme climate events keep taking place with greater frequency and intensity each year. This is threatening our food and energy security ... Climate change represents an imminent threat to balanced and well-adjusted development in our country ...

— *Conrado Oliveria, RED Uniendo Manos, Joining Hands Peru*

Burning carbon-based fossil fuels—like coal, oil and natural gas—for our energy produces greenhouse gases which warm the planet. This causes an increase in devastating fires, floods, droughts and storms. These effects impact impoverished and vulnerable communities first and most deeply.

Climate change effects can also cause massive destabilization, especially in countries already facing political insecurity and other circumstances that could easily become violent scenarios. Disasters caused by climate change widen rifts and exacerbate conflicts already existing in society as people seek to recover and to protect themselves for the future. The chaos that ensues from disasters and competition over an increasing scarcity of good resources can lead to violent upheavals between political rivals or between people groups. There is evidence that in climate-affected areas where chaos and competition become more prominent, companies and individuals with wealth and resources may increase armed protection of their resources.

In 2006 the General Assembly passed a [policy](#) calling Presbyterians to take the results of our energy consumption seriously, to pray asking for God's forgiveness and guidance, to reduce energy consumption, and to calculate carbon emissions and offset their negative impact. As we follow this policy, we can help make this earth a safer place for our children and grandchildren. Making peace with the earth and peacemaking go hand in hand. Having clean air and water, adequate green spaces and access to nature helps children's emotional, physical and spiritual growth. As we care for God's earth and combat climate change, people and whole communities will be able to pursue the pathways of peace.

We have the knowledge, skills and resources to reduce our energy consumption and switch to alternative energy sources that are less harmful to the environment. Prompt action and leadership can keep global climate change from causing its worst impacts—such as increased global violence—and can help us all to see a more peaceable kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven.



WORSHIP

Hymns about the Environment

Glory to God Hymnal, (Hymns #12–#48)

Climate care hymns from Presbyterian hymnwriter, [Rev. Carolyn Winfrey Gillette](#)

Worship Orders pertaining to the Environment

Sample Orders of Worship — Worship and Eco-Justice, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Blessing of the Animals — Web of Creation

Garden Blessing — Web of Creation

Season of Creation — A four-week worship and education program in September.

Key Scriptures Addressing Environmental Concerns

Genesis 2:15 — The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.

This text is often used to understand our vocation of caring for God's creation, with particular attention to the Hebrew verb that is translated as "serve" in addition to "till."

John 3:17 — Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

This text is often used to explore the concept that God sent Christ for the whole cosmos, not just for the sake of humanity. God's love and Christ's presence are for all of God's creation.

Revelation 22: 1-3 — Then the angel[a] showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life[b] with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

This text is often used to explore a vision of God's beloved community where people and nature work together to praise God, and humanity understands the healing power of God's creation such as a tree whose leaves can heal nations.

Other Scriptures

Genesis 1-2, Genesis 9:8-17, Exodus 16:12-30, Exodus 20:8-11, Exodus 23:10-13, Exodus 31: 12-17, Psalms: 8, 24, 65, 96, 104, 145, 146, 147, 148, Isaiah 24, 35, 40, 55, Isaiah 58:13-14, Isaiah 65:17-25, Ezekiel 34:2-4, Ezekiel 36, Matthew 6:1-3 (Lord's Prayer), Matthew 6:25-34, John 1:1-5, John 3:17, Romans 1:18-25, Romans 8:18-39, Philippians 4:4-13, Colossians 1:15-20, Hebrews 11:3, Revelation 21:1-4

Preaching on Climate Care

Three Layers of Environmental Preaching—an article by Rev. Peter Sawtell, Executive Director of Eco-Justice Ministries and a longtime ecumenical partner of the PC(USA) in caring for God's creation. He helpfully explains three different ways one can faithfully preach the gospel while illuminating current environmental challenges. In this article, he explains and then links to sample sermons on using "issue preaching," "generalized themes" and "deeper connections."

Sample Sermons on Climate Care

Here are a few sites that provide good examples of sermons that speak to issues of environmental care and climate change:

Interfaith Power and Light — This is an interfaith national organization that has state chapters in many of the U.S. states and is focused on energy and climate resources for faith communities.

Earth Ministry — This organization focuses on engaging the religious community in environmental stewardship and advocacy. Earth Ministry's Greening Congregations Program was the first in the country to help houses of worship implement sustainable practices. Their faithful advocacy program is on the cutting edge of empowering clergy and lay leaders to speak out on public policy issues. Through education, outreach, organizing and training, Earth Ministry builds a powerful moral constituency of people of faith taking action for the health of communities and the environment.

Additional Worship Resources

The following organizations offer additional tools for addressing environmental care and climate change in the context of worship:

Presbyterians for Earth Care — This website includes a list of suggested hymns from the Presbyterian Hymnal as well as a list of suggested scripture passages. They also have [Advent and Lenten devotional materials](#).

Creation Justice Ministries — This website includes annual Earth Day Sunday resources on diverse topics.

Eco-Justice Journey Blog — This is the Presbyterian Hunger Program's environmental and sustainable living blog.

Earth Ministry

Earth Ministry

Web of Creation

Green Faith

Interfaith Power and Light

Season of Creation

Lent 4.5

Let All Creation Praise

The Presbyterian Hunger Program — This is an index of recent resources available from the Presbyterian Hunger Program including the [Climate Care Challenge](#), the [Greening Congregation Guide](#), and Lent daily calendars for congregations and individuals



SPIRITUAL GROUNDING AND REFLECTION

Scripture

See key and additional scriptures in the Worship section of this resource.

The Green Bible, the New Revised Standard Version from HarperCollins Publishers

All verses dealing with God's care for creation are printed in green ink.

Call to Restore Creation

This call from the 1990 General Assembly policy "Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice" provides a good foundational/theological statement to ground a congregation's work on climate change and creation justice:

Creation cries out in this time of ecological crisis.

- Abuse of nature and injustice to people place the future in grave jeopardy.
- Population triples in this century.
- Biological systems suffer diminished capacity to renew themselves.
- Finite minerals are mined and pumped as if inexhaustible.
- Peasants are forced onto marginal lands, and soil erodes.
- The rich-poor gap grows wider.
- Wastes and poisons exceed nature's capacity to absorb them.
- Greenhouse gases pose threat of global warming.

The church has powerful reasons for engagement in restoring God's creation:

- God's works in creation are too wonderful, too ancient, too beautiful, too good to be desecrated.
- Restoring creation is God's own work in our time, in which God comes both to judge and to restore.
- The Creator-Redeemer calls faithful people to become engaged with God in keeping and healing the creation, human and nonhuman.
- Human life and well-being depend upon the flourishing of other life and the integrity of the life-supporting processes that God has ordained.

- The love of neighbor, particularly “the least” of Christ’s brothers and sisters, requires action to stop the poisoning, the erosion, the wastefulness that are causing suffering and death.
- The future of our children and their children and all who come after is at stake.
- In this critical time of transition to a new era, God’s new doing may be discerned as a call to earth-keeping, to justice, and to community.

Collaborative Agenda on Environmental Stewardship

Noting the deep concern about urgent environmental challenges expressed by many commissioners at the 220th General Assembly (2014), chief executives of the six agencies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) appointed a working group to develop a joint response. This document calls attention to ongoing efforts by the PC(USA) to confront the underlying causes of climate change, and to resources available through the six agencies to congregations, mid councils and other mission and ministry groups wishing to join in the effort.

Biblical Principles

“The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it; for God has founded it on the seas and established it on the rivers.” (Psalm 24)

Every reflection on our care for the world we inhabit must begin with this fundamental principle. The earth is a gift from God, the Sovereign Creator, and we, God’s creatures, are called to celebrate and honor its manifold glory. Our Westminster Shorter Catechism begins with the question: “What is the chief end of man?” The answer is: “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.” There is no more visible way for us to glorify God than in caring for the creation we see all around us, of which we are a part.

Stewardship and Sustainability

Not only are we called to give thanks for God’s glorious creation, we are given the task by God to oversee what God has created. We are, according to Scripture, God’s overseers and caretakers of the whole creation, which includes ourselves.

Unfortunately, we have too often misconstrued God’s call to “subdue” and to “have dominion” as license to exploit the manifold gifts of creation. The sad results of our exploitation are all around us. As God’s agents, rather than owners of the created order, we must understand that these two notions of “subduing” and exercising “dominion” derive directly from the sovereignty of God, and therefore must reflect the kind of just, loving oversight that is the very nature of God’s “dominion” over us and the creation.

We are, at the most basic level, called to be just, loving stewards of all creation, serving and preserving the earth. (Gen 2:15). Our commitment must be to the sustainability that God has willed for God’s creation, which means ensuring that all people and all of creation experience sufficiency in the resources they need to thrive, not only now, but for generations to come.

God’s Concern for the Poor

A central theme which runs throughout Scripture is God’s concern for the poor, the most vulnerable, the ones Jesus called “the least of these my brothers and sisters” (Matthew 25:40). It is central to God’s mandate for earthly rulers and a “bottom line” issue for God’s people. We cannot faithfully address environmental concerns without acknowledging the disproportionate impact of environmental degradation on those least able to defend themselves from the pollution of our air and water, the impact of many extractive industries and the unjust distribution of wealth derived from the exploitation of our global resources.

Whatever plans we devise for addressing our environmental concerns, we must begin by asking how our actions will affect the most vulnerable of God’s children and maintain our commitment to stand with them in the decisions we make.

We cannot faithfully address environmental concerns without acknowledging the disproportionate impact of environmental degradation on those least able to defend themselves from the pollution of our air and water, the impact of many extractive industries and the unjust distribution of wealth derived from the exploitation of our global resources.

The Scriptures are clear. There are consequences when we forget our role as God’s agents charged with care for the earth and we exploit the riches God has given us. It is no coincidence that the condemnations by the prophets in the face of the unfaithfulness of God’s people and their leaders often include God’s promise of terrible judgment made visible in the destruction of creation and the created order.

Restoration

In contrast to the terms of judgment in the prophetic warnings, God promises both a “new heaven” and a “new earth,” indeed a full restoration for all who have sought to be faithful in the stewardship of what God has created. That includes both our care for all sorts of human communities and individuals but also the created order that God declared good at the beginning.

It is this vision of God’s future that sustains us and moves us forward in our caring for others and for the whole earth.

Response

As the people of God, we are therefore called to work, in response to God’s calling, to see that all of God’s creation is protected, nurtured and enabled to reach the potential for which God has created it. The concrete implications of that for those of us who are a part of God’s family in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) include a call to prayer, education, advocacy and other forms of direct action to glorify God in our care of creation.



COMMUNITY BUILDING AND PARTNERSHIPS

As you prepare to engage in this work, there are questions that might be helpful to assess who in your congregation and in the community might be open to partnership. Consider having some reflection time over these questions. Your answers to these questions can help build bridges, identify commonalities, and keep hopeful, positive energy focused towards solutions

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER AS A SESSION, MISSION COMMITTEE OR CONGREGATION

- Knowing that people vary in their understanding of, and agreement on, climate change, what do you believe are things that most people want for the earth and future generations?
- What core Christian values and scriptural references are instructive regarding our moral responsibility to care for God's earth and respond to the disastrous impacts on climate change?
- Have any among you lived in another country and faced the challenges of a different culture?
- What impacts of climate change do you see affecting you, your community, our country and the world?
- What solutions, positive role models and movements are you aware of that are making a difference?
- Who else in the community is passionate about and working on issues of climate and peacemaking?
- What will your congregation need to sustain a focused effort on climate and peacemaking? How will you get the resources you need?
- Are there other churches or faith communities, perhaps some that aren't quite ready for action, that might be interested in discernment and dialogue on the issues of climate and peacemaking?

Here are some things to keep in mind when engaging this work and finding partners for dialogue and/or action:

- Not everyone agrees on the particulars of climate science and some find it politically divisive. Find ways to acknowledge ambivalence and to focus on the things that can be agreed upon (e.g., clean air, clean water, healthy grandchildren).
- Stay focused on positive solutions. Whether you're organizing an educational event or a community action, be aware of messages that are hopeful and positive. People find it most motivating if they have a sense of urgency ("we must") as well as agency ("we can").

- Some partners may be for just one particular program, project or event. Other might be longer-term allies. It is okay to have both.
- Not all movements and foci will resonate with your congregation, so choose something that works for your congregation as it is right now. See how the partner organization can fit your style, theology and personality. There may be some partners to save for later, after other successful partnerships.

PC(USA) Programs or Networks

PC(USA) Earth Care Congregations are congregations that have committed to the "Earth Care Pledge" and accomplished a specific number of actions toward caring for God's earth through worship, education, outreach and improved facilities.

Presbyterians for Earth Care is a grassroots network of Presbyterians caring for God's creation.

Living Waters for the World is a Synod of the Living Waters project working to provide clean water systems overseas.

Solar Under the Sun is a Synod of the Sun project working to provide solar energy projects in places of need.

Presbyterian Peace Fellowship/Fossil Free PCUSA works to encourage the denomination to divest from the fossil fuel industry.

PC(USA) Partner Organizations

Blessed Tomorrow is a PC(USA) partner that provides great resources, webinars, trainings and videos on climate change.

Creation Justice Ministries is the longtime ecumenical roundtable at which PC(USA) has joined other denominations that participate in the National Council of Churches. CJM was formerly called the National Council of Churches' Eco-Justice Working Group.

Green Faith is an interfaith organization based in New Jersey that works in congregations, seminaries and denominations—as well as globally—on climate and other environmental issues.

Interfaith Power and Light is an interfaith national organization that has state chapters in many of the U.S. states that focuses on energy and climate resources for faith communities.

Citizens Climate Lobby is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, grassroots advocacy organization focused on national policies to address climate change. CCL trains and supports volunteers to build relationships with elected officials, the media and their local community. The organization has resourced Presbyterians who are lobbying for carbon pricing.



STUDY AND PREPARATION

Blessed Tomorrow's 15 Steps is an eight-page resource that walks through the steps for effective climate communications. Developed by Blessed Tomorrow, a program of ecoAmerica, and shared with PC(USA), this resource provides a necessary process and flow for creating and delivering successful climate change communications that resonate with others.

Creation Justice Ministries provides numerous educational [resources](#) such as toolkits, fact sheets and bulletin inserts related to Earth Day Sunday, land and stewardship, environmental health. There are also summaries of scientific reports, such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the Fourth National Climate Assessment, specifically written to help people of faith understand these reports.

Environmental Ministries of the PC(USA), housed within the Presbyterian Hunger Program, provide a number of environmental resources, opportunities, ideas and educational and worship resources.

Presbyterians for Earth Care — provides recommended educational and curriculum [resources](#) as well as ecumenical and advanced education resources.

PC(USA) Policy Statement Highlights — This [webpage](#) provides a list (and links) to the major policies of the PC(USA) related to Ecology and Environmental Concerns.

Social Witness Policy Compilation — You can also search through the [Social Policy Compilation](#), GA Minutes, or PC(USA) Constitution to see what policies and issues the General Assembly has considered in the past. Chapter 6 (“The Created Order”) of the Social Witness Compilation provides a number of historical statements related to the environment. For more recent General Assembly policies, check out [pc-biz.org](#).

Eco-Justice Ministries Curriculum Review is intended to help church leaders research and select the very best resources for programming in their specific setting. Each review provides detailed descriptions of the curriculum and the reviewer’s commentary on many important criteria, including the difficulty, theological perspective, and desired educational outcome of the curriculum. The reviews—from an outstanding, international team of educators, pastors, and environmental specialists—are all based on a standardized evaluation form. The reviews are candid, detailed and comprehensive, and will provide you with vivid descriptions of what each of the resources really offers. This collection of reviews deals with curriculum materials touching on environmental topics that have been developed for churches. Curricula are available for all ages.

Just Eating? Practicing Our Faith at the Table is a seven-session curriculum from the Presbyterian Hunger Program that explores the relationship between the way we eat and the way we live. The study uses scripture,

prayer and stories from the local and global community. Versions are available for middle-school students and adults and are available in English and Spanish.

God’s Creation, Our Health: Taking Action Together is a PC(USA) four-session study for older elementary youth that connects faith, environmental stewardship and young people in Peru to young people in our U.S. congregations.

Solar Under the Sun’s Vacation Bible School Curriculum is designed for kindergarten through fifth-grade students to consider how the Bible calls us and provides guidance in serving as God’s stewards of the earth. Through Bible study, learning centers and mission moments, participants will learn about the role of solar power as it sustains life, gives energy, lights the earth, brings warmth and promotes growth. Each day includes a gathering time, a Bible study, solar puzzles and experiments, solar crafts, snacks and games and solar mission moments.

Clean Water for All God’s Children Vacation Bible School Curriculum from Living Waters from Living Waters for the World takes children on a journey to countries where clean water is not readily available and helps them learn about the value of clean water and how children in Haiti, Cuba, Honduras, Ghana and Mexico struggle for clean water.

New Community Project Vacation Bible School curriculum was written for use in Vacation Bible School settings, but could be adapted to other short-term learning contexts. Without diminishing the Genesis creation accounts, it draws in a variety of creation stories (e.g., Native American, other faith traditions and children’s literature) when speaking of the earth’s beginnings. This is done in order to raise awareness that many different cultures have thought about how the earth began. While it is not possible to make people care about the earth, it is possible to help them understand what we are doing to the earth and what we can do differently and better. This curriculum attempts to do this by connecting with and meeting the individual in a familiar place. These materials combine information with a teaching approach that also invites thoughtful interaction and even emotional involvement.

Children’s Health Initiative from the Environmental Working Group provides tips sheets and research for parents on topics such as better tap water, avoiding flame retardants, avoiding pesticides and safer cosmetics.

The Just Living Series from the Presbyterian Hunger Program provides resources on lifestyle integrity including seasonal materials, each individually tailored to address the seasonal needs and concerns that arise while trying to live faithfully in the United States, as well as resources for everyday living. The Just Living series helps individuals, couples and families practice faith in all aspects of daily life because the “little” decisions about what we buy, how we get places and the ways we celebrate and live all add up and impact people and the planet.

Films and Documentaries

Cherishing God's Earth (2010) This DVD explores eco-justice issues in five parts: Earth, Air, Water, Habitat and People. It calls viewers to a new lifestyle that is based on stewardship and compassion.

Renewal (2008) is a documentary about people of faith working on environmental stewardship with tools. *Renewal* is the first feature-length documentary film to capture the vitality and diversity of today's religious-environmental activists. From within their Christian, Jewish, Buddhist and Muslim traditions, Americans are becoming caretakers of the Earth. With great courage, these women, men and children are re-examining what it means to be human and how we live on this planet. Their stories of combating global warming and the devastation of mountaintop removal, of promoting food security, environmental justice, recycling, land preservation and of teaching love and respect for life on Earth are the heart of *Renewal*.

Ken Burns' *National Parks Religious Study Guides* and "Clips" DVDs from Earth Ministry. In 2009, PBS broadcast a beautiful 12-hour portrait of our national parks entitled *The National Parks: America's Best Idea*. Shot over six years, the film describes the evolution of the national park concept and the development of the National Park System, which now protects 84 million acres. Earth Ministry partnered with PBS to offer a set of two religious study guides to complement the film: a four-session Christian education course (*And God Saw That It Was Good*), and a one-session interfaith course (*Awakening the Spirit*).

Deep Down (2010) is a documentary on mountaintop-removal coal mining. Beverly May and Terry Ratliff grew up like kin on opposite sides of a mountain ridge in eastern Kentucky. Now in their 50s, the two find themselves in the midst of a debate dividing their community and the world: who controls, consumes and benefits from our planet's shrinking supply of natural resources?

Let There Be ... Stuff? (2016), a 6-session curriculum connecting faith, consumerism and environmental stewardship from GreenFaith and the Story of Stuff Project, is designed for a group of 6–15 youth between 13–18 years old to attend at their house of worship and is led by a facilitator. The program is organized in six sections:

- 1) **Caring for Creation** — opening ourselves to the awe and wonder of creation and our role as Earth stewards.
- 2) **The Story of Stuff** — revealing the whole story of stuff, from cradle to grave, its impact on people and the planet and hearing the call to take action.
- 3) **An Unfortunate Creation Story** — looking at the specific stories of some of our favorite stuff: What's in it, how it was made, how it got to us and the real cost of production to the planet and people.
- 4) **Don't Buy It** — learning how we are being manipulated by the media to keep endlessly consuming and how we can start thinking for ourselves and have more fun.
- 5) **Waste Not** — learning where our stuff goes when it leaves our hands, the

true cost to people and the planet and how we can reduce our waste. 6) **Going Forth** — celebrating students' achievement in taking the course and supporting them in taking their next steps as Earth stewards beyond the course.

Books

50 Ways to Help Save the Earth, by Rebecca Barnes, Westminster John Knox Press, revised 2016

The Year without a Purchase: One Family's Quest to Stop Shopping and Start Connecting, by Scott Dannemiller, Westminster John Knox Press, 2015

Inhabiting Eden: Christians, The Bible, and The Ecological Crisis, by Patricia K. Tull, Westminster John Knox Press, 2013

Renewing The Face Of The Earth: A Theological and Pastoral Response to Climate Change, by David Atkinson, Westminster John Knox Press, 2008

Darwin, Divinity, and the Dance of the Cosmos, by Bruce Sanguin, Westminster John Knox Press, 2007

Downloadable Studies

The Green Study Pack is a six-session study pack which takes a down-to-earth look at the practical concerns we should be aware of relating to global climate change. Specifically, how global climate change is actually affecting our land, water and air, and what can be done about it. By "we," we don't mean the government, or the Environmental Protection Agency, or scientists or any other group; rather what can we personally do to honor God's creation instead of contributing to its destruction? The sessions include: *Air Pollution: Inside and Out*; *A Return to Recycling*; *Land: Conservation and Renewal*; *Being Green at Home*; *Being Green in Daily Life and Water: Precious Gift and Endangered Resource*.

Serve, Not Rule, by Patricia K. Tull, 2014

What the Bible Says About Ecology, by Patricia K. Tull, 2012

Genesis and the Goodness of Creation, by Nancy Ferguson, 2011

An Inconvenient Truth: Facts about Global Warming, by Greg Garrett, 2007

What Would Jesus Drive?, by Rebecca J. Barnes, 2006

Downloadable Studies for Youth

Faith Questions: God's Creation leader's guide. This 4-session study explores the questions: How Are We Related to God's Creation?, What Does the Old Testament Say About Taking Care of Creation?, What Would Jesus Recycle?, and What Else Can I Do to Be a "Green" Christian?" Faith Questions studies are based on faith questions posed by youth. Each session encourages young people to look to Scripture, as well as our faith tradition, in relevant and responsive ways. Intended for older youth, this curriculum is easily adaptable for broadly graded youth programs.

Travel Studies for Young Adults

Eco-Stewards Program

The Eco-Stewards program is a creative community that shapes, inspires and connects young adult leaders (ages 20–30) through storytelling and place-based pilgrimages focused on faith and the environment. The program uses a weeklong, place-based learning program to create community among young adult leaders (ages 20–30) who care about the importance of the intersection between their faith and environmental stewardship. Each year, the Eco-Stewards Program invites young adults (ages 20–30) to travel with the program and immerse themselves in a new place to learn how people of faith are living from the land and responding to environmental challenges in their communities.

Downloadable Studies for Adults

Being Reformed: Stewardship of Creation, by

Henry G. Brinton, 2012 — This is a series of biblically based mini-courses that provides adults with a foundational understanding of the Reformed faith. Each six-session study—written by well-known and respected scholars — features Scripture, prayer, in-depth commentary, and questions for reflection. Each study addresses its subject from a Reformed theological perspective. It includes a [participant book](#) and [leader's guide](#).

Lent 4.5 by the Passionist Earth and Spirit Center — Lent 4.5 is a seven-week faith formation program which inspires and informs Christian communities on how to use the traditional Lenten disciplines of prayer, fasting and almsgiving to protect God's creation, embrace Gospel justice and nurture spiritual fulfillment. It offers practical opportunities for people of faith to apply the values of Christian simplicity to their everyday lives. The program is based on the principle of imagining “if the Earth were divided equally among all of us, each person would receive 4.5 acres. Now imagine that everything you need — food, energy, home, clothing, gadgets — must come from those 4.5 acres. But it takes 22.3 acres to maintain the average American lifestyle. There is a new way of observing Lent that helps us care for God's creation by taking steps toward using only our fair share of its resources. Moving in the direction of 4.5 is essential for anyone walking in the footsteps of Jesus today.”

Season of Creation provides worship and education resources including Bible studies, sermon materials and other resources. The *Season of Creation* offers an opportunity for churches to introduce new visual elements into their worship and to be ecumenical and connected with creation in a particular context. The Sundays of the first year in the three-year cycle of *Creation* are called Forest Sunday, Land Sunday, Outback/Wilderness Sunday and River Sunday. Congregations can turn the sanctuary into a vibrant part of creation as they celebrate with creation. The *Season of Creation* was originally started in Australia in 2005 and now is celebrated in many countries around the world.

Northwest Earth Institute's Seeing Systems: Peace, Justice and Sustainability — How does one mold such complex principles as peace, justice and sustainability into a coherent story? The difficulty reflects the media's broader struggle to convey how these themes are mutually linked. Seeing Systems: Peace, Justice and Sustainability connects the dots between three of society's most pressing challenges and helps participants find pathways for powerful change in our everyday lives. It is a self-led discussion course designed to spark shared learning, shared stories and shared action. Each course book also includes tips and guidelines to help facilitators organize a course. Participants read each week's material (which may include brief articles, book excerpts and/or links to online content) on their own. During each session, group members take turns facilitating by leading others through discussion questions provided in the course book.



DIRECT ACTION AND ADVOCACY

Here are some suggestions for your congregation to take direct action or engage in advocacy on the issues of climate change and climate care:

Take the Climate Care Challenge (PCUSA) — is an eight-page resource that walks through the steps for effective climate communications. Developed by Blessed Tomorrow, a program of ecoAmerica, and shared with PC(USA), this resource provides a necessary process and flow for creating and delivering successful climate change communications that resonate with others.

Become an Earth Care Congregation — Join over 200 other PC(USA) congregations in committing to caring for God's creation as we worship, maintain our physical space, share Christian Education and do outreach in our community.

Make Adjustments at Home — Encourage church members to switch out light bulbs for LEDs, adjust thermostats for energy efficiency, perform home energy audits or carbon calculations. This [guide](#) from the [U.S. Department of Energy](#) and carbon footprint calculator from the [Environmental Protection Agency](#) provide useful tips for all these options.

Hold an Educational Event in Addition to Earth Day Sunday Worship — Earth Day is celebrated on April 22 each year, and Presbyterian churches are urged to celebrate Earth Day Sunday. But your congregation can go a step further and hold an educational or environmental justice-themed event at another time of the year as well such as World Day of Prayer for Care of Creation on September 1, or October 8, the Sunday before Columbus Day/Indigenous Peoples' Day. Some resources listed [here](#) from the PC(USA) and other organizations are written to be useful year-round and can provide helpful examples and inspiration for your event.

Consider Solar Panels — Learn about other congregations' projects to install [solar panels](#). This link includes a webinar that outlines discusses the processes that five Presbyterian congregations used to fund, promote and install solar panels on their church buildings. Their experiences may give you inspiration for how to pursue similar efforts. This webpage also outlines some important factors to consider as your congregation contemplates pursuing renewable energy projects. Your congregation can also purchase renewable energy through your local utility if available.

Invest in the Environment — Help move your congregation's investments and pension funds to climate-supportive options and challenge climate-harming practices. Learn more about environmental stewardship and fossil-free fund options available through the PC(USA)'s [Board of Pensions](#) and the [Presbyterian Foundation](#). If your congregation manages its own investments, follow the shareholder-proxy voting recommendations from the PC(USA)'s Committee on [Mission Responsibility Through Investment \(MRTI\)](#). MRTI engages corporations in which the denomination owns stock through correspondence, dialogue, voting shareholder proxies and occasionally filing shareholder resolutions. The Committee makes recommendations to Presbyterian shareholders as to how to vote on their shareholder proxies. The Committee also provides an investment screening list based on the mission goals and policies of the General Assembly.

Advocate Against Land Grabbing and Deforestation — Advocate to TIAA (formerly TIAA-CREF) to stop supporting land grabbing and deforestation. TIAA is one of the largest investment firms in the U.S. and manages retirement funds for many academic and cultural institutions including universities, museums, nonprofits, unions, health services and National Public Radio. The firm has over several hundred million dollars invested in land grabbing and deforestation that has resulted in human rights violations around the world. Grassroots International has organized a [petition and letter-writing campaign](#) to change TIAA's practices.

Advocate for Strong Climate Action — This advocacy can be done on local, national and international levels. Sign up for the Office of Public Witness [action alerts](#) in order to make your voice heard and to stay connected to emerging climate and environmental issues in public policy discussions. Whether it be establishing policies on pricing carbon, maintaining clean air and water protections or upholding our country's commitment to international agreements, it is crucial for people of faith to lift up our voices and take a moral stand for the climate.

Set a Goal — Challenge your school, workplace, church or other institutions to set a goal, such as going 100% renewable energy or carbon neutral by 2030.

Use the Study and Devotional Guide for the Sustainable Development Goals — In 2015, the United Nations adopted 17 Goals to end poverty, fight inequalities and mitigate climate change. This guide outlines all 17 Sustainable Development Goals and relevant efforts by the PC(USA) and our partners to achieve the goals and includes biblical reflections from PC(USA) staff to provide scriptural grounding for these efforts. Review this guide and learn about the intersections of climate and environmental care, peacemaking and faith at the UN and around the world.



IMMIGRATION & MIGRATION

Curated by Susan Krehbiel, *Presbyterian Disaster Assistance*,
Amanda Craft, *Manager for Advocacy, Office of Immigration Issues*, and
Teresa Waggener, *Immigration Attorney, Office of Immigration Issues*

INTRODUCTION

The movement of people is as old as the history of humanity, and the ability to relocate or migrate has been core to our survival. Today there are more than 70 million people who have been forcibly displaced from their home towns—within their own countries and across national borders. Even as international migration, both voluntary and involuntary, is at its highest ever, there is also increasing tension about the rights of individuals vs. the rights of governments to control migration. In this resource, we will focus on how the Commitment to Peacemaking can be applied to address the root causes that force people to flee in the first place as well as how to be peacemakers in the midst of an increasingly tense and conflictual debate over the treatment of people who come to the U.S. borders (land or air) in search of safety and freedom.

What is forced migration?

In the study of international migration, there is often a discussion of “push factors” and “pull factors” to explain why people move from one country to another. In most circumstances, an individual or group’s decision to migrate encompasses both of these factors. The term “forced migration” has been adopted by many universities and research institutes to encompass a wide range of push factors that compel people to leave, effectively causing their displacement—fleeing from war and other forms of violence, famine, persecution, oppression, government corruption, abject poverty and natural disasters. When people feel forced to leave, displaced by circumstances beyond their control, their decision to migrate has little to do with pull factors. Forced migration, therefore, requires a humanitarian and compassionate response.

The Global Context

Where are these 70 million displaced persons coming from, and where are they living now?

Over 40 million are internally displaced, living within their home country. The rest are refugees — either in the process of seeking asylum or already recognized as refugees, unable to return to their home country due to a fear of persecution. The three countries with the largest number internally displaced people are: Colombia with over 9 million people, Syria with 6.5 million and the Democratic Republic of Congo with over 5 million.

About 80% of refugees live in countries neighboring their countries of origin.



*UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Figures at a Glance, 19 June 2019 [accessed 18 September 2019].

EXAMPLES OF REFUGEE HOST COUNTRIES IN 2019:

Turkey — hosts on the largest refugee populations, over 3.6 million, most from Syria. Refugees represent 5% of their population.

Lebanon — hosting almost 1 million Syrians as well as other nationalities, representing 1/6 of their population.

Pakistan — hosting about 1.4 million refugees, mostly from Afghanistan.

Uganda — hosting about 1.4 million refugees from South Sudan and other African countries.

Germany — 1 million already recognized as refugees and ½ million still seeking asylum, almost 2% of the total population. This is the country’s second large spike in refugee arrivals, with similar numbers are the fall of Yugoslavia in the 1990s.

What about the U.S.?

The United States has resettled about three million refugees over a 30-year period, an average of 95,000 refugees per year. In addition, it has recognized several hundred thousand asylum seekers, today resettling less than 30,000. Numbers of asylum seekers are on the rise — it is difficult to get current statistics, but it is estimated that over 800,000 are waiting a decision¹. The total U.S. population is 327 million, making the asylum-seeking population less than three-tenths of one percent (0.003).

PC(USA) Policy

The history of Presbyterians advocating on behalf of immigrants dates back to 1893 when the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. opposed the Chinese Exclusion Act. Today Presbyterians continue this legacy by working locally as well as nationally to join the struggle to ensure that immigration policy is more just and consistent with Christian principles.

The current PC(USA) policy compilation will soon be replaced by a more comprehensive online tool.

Commitment to Peacemaking

When considering how your congregation might carry out its commitment to peacemaking in the context of refugees and migration, it may be helpful to consider the whole migration cycle. How can peacemaking help address the root causes that force people to migrate? Violence is the number-one contributor to displacement. Likewise, most of the world's refugees dream of the day when they can return home, when it is safe and dignified to do so. Peacemaking has an important role in addressing the injustices of the past, mediating present conflicts and working toward just and peaceful resolutions where reconciliation is possible.

Peacemaking is also important in the midst of the migration experience. Peacemakers can play a vital role in providing humanitarian support along the journey and being places of welcome at the destination. In today's current anti-immigrant nationalist movements, peacemakers stand for the rights of refugees and migrants. They advocate against unjust treatment and help monitor access to refugee rights. They accompany refugees and asylum seekers as they make their way through the U.S. immigration system, as they look for work, settle into their new home, enroll their children in school and become a part of the community, including a worshipping community.



WORSHIP

Worship is our expression of gratitude and praise to God. It is the place we come together to confess our faults, shortcomings, brokenness. It is the place we are pardoned. It is a time to remember, to pray for, and to celebrate others in our community. It is the place that grounds us in who God calls us to be and sends us out to the world to extend God's love, compassion, grace and peace.

Remembering and celebrating immigrants, migrants and refugees is an important practice in worship. Here are pieces of liturgy and worship elements to utilize:

Hymns:

Glory to God Hymnal

- 69 I, the Lord of Sea and Sky/Here I am, Lord
- 695 Change My Heart, O God
- 756 O God of Every Nation
- 762 When the Poor Ones/Cuando el pobre
- 765 Song of Hope/Canto de Esperanza
- 769 For Everyone Born

El Himnario Presbiteriano (Spanish)

- 3 Al despuntar en la loma el día
- 306 Yo, el Dios de cielo y mar

Sing the Faith

- 2172 We Are Called
- 2191 Bless Now, O God, the Journey
- 2183 Unsettled World

Hymns by Rev. Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, Presbyterian Pastor

- Lord, When Were You a Stranger
- One Day, Naomi and Ruth Crossed a Border
- Young Joseph the Dreamer

“God of the Traveler” (William McConnell © 2018 5.5.5.4.D)

Suggested Tune: Come to the Table (*Glory to God*, #508)

Alternate Tune: Bunesan

God of the traveler,
God of the journey,
Shelter and refuge,
Savior and friend.
Traveling with us,
Our close companion,
Grant us protection,
‘Til journey’s end.

Refugee fleeing
Prison and torture;
Seeking asylum, Living in fear.
Children and parents
Torn from each other,
Great God of mercy
Hear heartfelt prayer.

Parents of Jesus,
Refugee guardians,
Flee Herod’s rage,
you Shelter the child.
Fathers and mothers,
Children beloved,
To you entrusted,
God’s undefiled.

Wanderers, travelers,
Weary and worried,
God grant us strength and
Courage to dare.
Risking our safety,
Freedom, and status,
Your children need us,
Dare us to care.

Visual Images to use during worship, education or other programming:

Arte de Lágrimas (art of tears) — a traveling exhibit of drawings in which art is used as the vehicle for Central American children and mothers seeking refuge in the United States to tell their migration story and/or detention story. It is curated by Reverend Dr. Gregory L. Cuellar, director of the Refugee Artwork Project in Austin. He can be reached at GCuellar@austinseminary.edu.

El Sueño Americano — Tom Keifer worked as a janitor at a CBP station in Ajo, AZ. During that time, he witnessed the mass of personal property discarded by CBP

officials as non-essential. He started to photograph objects to make sense of how humanity is washed away in our immigration system. This particular collection is called “El Sueño Americano.”

Prayers

Prayer for World Refugee Day
Prayer for a World Uprooted
Beatitudes Prayer (for families separated), Immigration Prayer for a Rally, and Presente Prayer (written for General Assembly 2018)

Sermon Ideas

“We are all migrants/Todos somos migrantes,” by Rev. Tony Aja
Reflection on “midwives” for the Kentucky Council of Churches, by Rev. Tony Aja
“No Human Is Illegal,” by Rev. Mark Koenig
“Your Prayer is Our Prayer,” by Rev. Mamie Broadhurst

Readings from the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

The Book of Order — W-5.0304: Justice and Peace, Directory of Worship
The Book of Confessions — The Confession of Belhar

Liturgical Resources from the Book of Common Worship (2018):

Prayers after a Violent Event (p. 593-594)
Service after a Violent Event (p. 595-598)
Service for Justice and Peace (p. 599-632) with special prayer for Refugees and Migrants (p. 630-631)
Las Posadas (Season of Advent) worship service (p. 180-183)
Praying for Neighbors (p. 640)



SPIRITUAL GROUNDING AND REFLECTION

A journey made in hope

The choice to be on the move is born of a belief that there is something better planned for your life and that there is a place where one can fully realize that better plan. It is born of faith and hope.

Prayers

Here are some of the faith-filled words of those who are and have been on the move:

MY JOURNEY WITH PAIN (Written by a Syrian woman from the Presbyterian Church in Latakia, Syria)

My journey with pain started the day my husband, our three children and I were driven out of our house and land. We suffered days feeling crushed, sad, horrified that I can't put in words. Sleep, rest and peace deserted me for a long time. God alone knows what the five of us suffered, especially when we started feeling hungry, short of food. But, thank God, He didn't desert us; He didn't forget us. My prayer to

you, My God, is to give me, as a mother and wife, the peace of your Spirit, so that how wild life's storms get and shake the boat of my life, I wouldn't feel afraid, because you are with me. My Lord, grant that I would find my joy in you and with you no matter how heavy my sorrow, exhaustion and worry get. Teach me longsuffering and patience, so I wouldn't grudge anyone; and uphold me with power and victory over all difficulties that come in my way. Fill my heart, O Lord, with the comforts of your Holy Spirit, so that I'd be able to comfort others around me, and those in similar situation. Help me to lean on you, and trust you, and draw close to you; and to listen to your voice and wonderful words that say: “Take courage; fear not. For, lo I am with you all the days, and to the end of days.” Forgive me if I go stray away from you sometimes. Forgive me if I say sharp words about those people who took our house and belongings and caused us all woe. Let your peace, O Lord, fill my heart and life, and the hearts and lives of all agonized mothers. To you and your Spirit be all praise and gratitude forever.

A MOTHER'S DAY PRAYER FROM SYRIA (Written by a Syrian mother from Damascus who had to emigrate)

With a heart full of genuine love to you, my God ... from far, far away ... from the freeze of estrangement I lift mine eyes to a sky unlike the sky of my homeland ... to a sun that doesn't warm me like the sun of my country, and plead your support and mercy. Today I feel like the numerous mothers whom the circumstances have driven far away from their loved ones. Yearnings kindle every morning, mixed with the tears of sorrow for a homeland crying for its parting with its children, for a soil longing for rain—not rivers of blood; children quaffing the cup of pain, want, and hardships every day ... a mother who lost her children, another who has no provider, and families who ended up homeless, and a homeless child seeking warmth and a loving breast but finds none. I miss my children who have struggled days, months and years ... Years separate us after being dispersed in God's spacious world. I miss playing with my grandson, and hugging the other, and enjoying their faces. They are growing, and here I am begging for a child's voice. I yearn for a country whose roses were soaked with blood, and changed it jasmines into thorns. I yearn for the noise of streets, and the sound of church bells, and hymn singing that embraces the skies. Bodies separated afar, but hearts are still there, because they refuse to beat except in Syria, and pray for it with every breath in and out. My God; you know me. You have stood with me through the most dangerous moments of my sickness and pain, and have granted me your peace when you reached out your hand and healed me. You cleaned me of every malicious cell that threatened my life. Then, I was suffering; but today the Malicious Cells spread with pain all over my country ... and no cure; Cain came with a new name to slaughter Abel, carrying with him the law of the wild, killing, slaughtering, and burning. But I fully trust

in your power to do miracles in healing people in sorrow, you the Great Physician. As you have calmed the storm, and silenced the wind, I pray you would clear out this black cloud and cure the wounds, and wipe out the tears, and bring the far away back to their mothers' bosoms. You shall bring back the smiles to the faces of children and restore life to the deserted homes; because you have said, 'fear not; lo, I am with you all the days and to the end of days; be of good courage.' Yes, Lord; we trust, and pray, here and in all the places we have been scattered, bring back safety to our country; hold it under your wings, and change the evil hearts. Break the chains, and liberate the minds. Send your Holy Spirit to the mothers and enable them to bear all hardships. Teach us to forgive as you have forgiven. Hear, O Lord, our supplications for Syria, who calls for you day and night. We look to you, Rock of Ages, with trust that the day of relief is nigh, for you are the Captain of the ship; it shall not drown as long as you hold the rein. Hear my prayer, for you are my shelter, rock, and salvation.

First-Hand Accounts

Stories from young members of Urban Life Ministries, San Diego, California

These first-hand accounts provide a glimpse of people who migrated to the U.S. as children and their hopes that the DREAM Act and DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) would provide them with access to education and prohibit their deportation.

Videos for Reflection

These videos provide faith-filled words of inspiration of what it means to have an open heart to both accompany and receive persons on the move:

Advent Reflection, Rev. Dr. Gregory Cuéllar

As part of the 2018 PC(USA) Wall of Welcome delegation to McAllen, Texas, Rev. Dr. Gregory Cuéllar accompanied a student delegation from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. During the Season of Advent in 2018, Dr. Cuéllar shared this reflection on migration and the Bible.

Ash Wednesday Reflection, Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly

In this video from the U.S.–Mexico border, the Reverend Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II, Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), speaks from a cemetery in Brooks County, Texas. For Ash Wednesday in 2019, he reflects on the cruel state of the immigration system in the United States.

Written Reflections

The following collection of writings provides a variety of reflections on immigration. Many of these were written for immigration emphasis days like World Refugee Day and Immigration Sunday.

Really Putting Christ Back in Christmas (A Curious Faith), by Rev. Angela Maddalone
"The decision to migrate is also not the end of the story," a Reflection and Prayer for World Refugee Day 2016, by Teresa Waggener and Rev. Mark Koenig

Presbyterians can provide a voice for people who are waiting to be resettled, April 2019 Reflection for World Refugee Day, by Susan Krehbiel
2018 Immigration Sunday Reflection: Do Not Fear, Office of Immigration Issues
2019 Immigration Sunday Reflection: Believing in Abundance, Office of Immigration Issues

Articles

How Does the End of DACA Hit Home for Presbyterians? by the Reverend Wendy Neff of Bethel Presbyterian Church, 2017

This article, written by a pastor at a church in Tennessee, reflects on the impact of the end of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) on an immigrant family in her congregation and on her faith community's response.



COMMUNITY BUILDING AND PARTNERSHIPS

It has been said that problems are never solved by only looking at what is missing or lacking. Problems or challenges are overcome by what we have to offer. When it comes to ministries with refugees and immigrants, they are our most important resource. As you consider what your congregation might bring to a relationship with refugees and immigrants in your community, use the following questions to help guide you to your strengths and gifts for this work.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER AS A SESSION, MISSION COMMITTEE OR CONGREGATION

- What is motivating your congregation to become involved in this area? How can you build that concern into action?
- Do you have members of your congregation with their own refugee or immigrant experience?
- Have any members lived in another country and faced the challenges of integration with another culture?
- What languages are spoken?
- Do you have an existing relationship with a church or organization that serves people from other countries?
- Where is your church located in relationship to immigrant neighborhoods and refugee-serving organizations? Do you have any space you can offer for groups to gather or for office space?
- What connections do you have with local government and other policy makers, other faith communities, civic organizations?
- What experiences can you draw on as a congregation to set a good foundation for you to enter into a new relationship or deepen an existing one?

It is important to contact and interact with those already doing work with refugees and immigrants. The U.S. is blessed with a wide range of nonprofit organizations and both faith-based and secular groups who are committed to protecting the rights of refugees and asylum seekers. Individual Presbyterian congregations have been providing social, financial, emotional and spiritual care for decades. Today there is an ever-growing number of refugee- and immigrant-led organizations and coalitions offering a space for refugees and immigrants to speak out on their own behalf. Getting to know who is active in your own community is an important step before deciding how your congregation can or should engage. If you are a primarily non-immigrant congregation reaching out to an immigrant-led organization, do not be surprised if their first reaction is one of suspicion. It is important to lead with a desire for relationship-building. Action should grow out of a place of trust and understanding.

Connect with Local Offices

Below is a list of local offices that might help you to locate others already engaged in this work. If you don't see something listed near you, here are a few good places to start:

Public Schools — Schools are an excellent place to learn about the diversity of your community. Teachers and school social workers serve students of all backgrounds, including refugees and immigrants. They are often in the position of connecting their students with community resources way beyond their educational needs.

Legal Services Providers — Local nonprofit legal services may be one of the only formal organizations in some communities. They are often stretched beyond their capacity and looking for partners to provide other types of services and social support. They may also be aware of other immigrant coalitions and other grassroots organizations.

Places of Worship — Churches, temples, mosques and other houses of worship often include people at risk for immigration enforcement and collaborate with larger community ministries and organizations. They are an ideal place to start relationship building in a safe space.

City Office for New Americans — Many cities have established an office to provide services for residents who are born outside the U.S. or speak a language other than English. The names of these offices vary. Some include specific reference to immigrants, while many have chosen to use the terminology “new Americans.” Check with your city to find the right office.

State Office for Refugees and Asylees — Most states have an office or department responsible for overseeing public services and grants to nonprofit organizations that serve refugees and asylum seekers in the state. These offices are typically located within the State Department of Human Services or its equivalent. Note: Some states have closed the office and the responsibilities have been given to a nonprofit organization.

Refugee Resettlement Agencies — Many of these agencies work with specific populations identified as refugees but have contacts with organizations that serve others beyond.

Sanctuary Movement Coalitions — Although they grow out of providing sanctuary, many coalitions have broader objectives, actions and activities.

Connect with Denominational Programs, Offices, Staff and Networks

PC(USA) Offices

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance is a ministry of relief and response to national and international disasters, aid to refugees and displaced persons, refugee resettlement and efforts toward development. PDA partners with mid councils and local congregations in the US and with church partners and faith-based relief organizations internationally. Find us on [Facebook](#).

The Office of Immigration Issues was established in 2004 to provide legal advice and counsel to mid councils and congregations regarding immigration issues. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has expanded the work of the Office to coordinate advocacy and education efforts and create worship materials on immigration. Find us on Facebook: [Presbyterians for Just Immigration](#), and sign up for our newsletter: [Presbyterians for Just Immigration](#).

The Office of Public Witness is the public policy information and advocacy office. Its task is to advocate, and help the church to advocate, the social witness perspectives and policies of the Presbyterian General Assembly. Read their blog for the most recent news. Find us on [Facebook](#), and sign up to receive [Action Alerts](#).

PC(USA) Networks

Presbyterians For Just Immigration (PFJI) is a network of Presbyterians interested in addressing the crisis caused by a broken immigration system. PFJI is committed to fostering discussion, sharing resources, promoting advocacy and writing liturgy on various immigration topics. PFJI hopes to empower Presbyterians to share vision, best practices, resources and a passionate concern for those coming to the United States to live and work so that we can become the church God is calling us to be, together. Sign up to be a part of the Just Immigration group.

National Organizations

Freedom for Immigrants (formerly known as CIVIC), based in California, provides resources for detention visitation, including a national map of detention centers and established visitation programs and advocacy resources.

Interfaith Immigration Coalition is made up of faith-based organizations focused on public policy concerning immigration. The PC(USA) is a steering committee member.

Immigo is an App from iTunes that provides an up-to-date directory of immigration legal service providers as well as regular news updates. It is a service of Immigration Advocacy Network,

Refugee Resettlement: There are nine national organizations that work with the U.S. Department of State to coordinate the initial reception of newly resettled refugees with a combined network of approximately 200 local offices. For the most up-to-date information, you can contact PDA, or visit one of the websites found on this contact list.



STUDY AND PREPARATION

The right to migrate is recognized in Article Thirteen of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and reads,

1. *Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.*
2. *Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.”*

For Christians, migration is more than a right — it is the story of our people. God sent Abraham to a new land to be a blessing. The Hebrews fled genocide in Egypt. Jesus migrated to the human condition and lived among us.

This key element of human nature is under attack. The motivations and character of those on the move and those newly arrived is questioned and vilified in popular culture. Through our relationship building in the previous section, we can free ourselves of some of the effects that popular culture has had on our own unconscious biases, but gaining that freedom is a journey that is never fully complete.

This section of the resource is intended to provide you with a collection of resources to deepen your understanding and awareness of migration.

Films and Study Guides

The PC(USA) has produced a number of educational films and study guides:

Families Held Captive (23 minutes.) covers the opening of family detention centers in Texas in 2014. This film is still relevant as the use of family detention continues and is expected to expand.

Locked in a Box: Immigration Detention (24 minutes.) is an award-winning short documentary that follows the stories of individuals held in the U.S. Immigration detention system and those who visit them.

To Breathe Free (16 minutes.), a 2017 award-winning documentary, captures the intersection of individual narratives from a family fleeing Vietnam to the Syrian Conflict to the families who help create a new home in our nation's capital.

Facing the Human Tragedy in Syria (12 minutes)

contains interviews with our sister churches in Syria and Lebanon about the war and their humanitarian response along with interviews with PC(USA) members and staff on the need for advocacy to find a peaceful solution. **The Genesis of Exodus: The Roots of Central American Migration** (49 mins.) contains interviews with people living in Guatemala and El Salvador about the root causes of migration to the U.S. along with several PC(USA) leaders. Resources include an interactive website “story map” and reflection guide.

Books for Children About Refugees

This is an [annotated list](#) of books which are commercially available about refugees, including picture books for the very young. Books can facilitate dialogue and help children think about how they can become welcoming to children in their schools and community groups.

Visit readbrightly.com/books-to-help-kids-understand-what-its-like-to-be-a-refugee

Toolkits

PC(USA) Welcome Action Guide invites Presbyterians to extend biblical hospitality and stand in solidarity with our refugee neighbors. It includes background, guidance and resources to help you and your congregation get started in welcoming refugees to our community.

Interfaith Immigration Toolkits provide a whole range of guides for congregations from becoming a sanctuary church to specific advocacy campaigns. The toolkits also include guidance for faith communities on how to respond to immigration raids and how to plan a refugee welcome event.

Sample refugee “sponsorship” or welcome guide from Nassau Presbyterian Church. The congregation of Nassau Presbyterian Church has a long tradition of sponsoring refugees, welcoming nine refugee families over the past 50 years. Tom Charles, elder at Nassau Presbyterian Church, worked to put together this guide for churches, individuals and organizations looking to get involved in refugee resettlement.

The Toolkit for Congregations to Faithfully Accompany People Seeking Asylum is designed as a resource for congregations in the United States to accompany individuals and families seeking asylum in their journey to find safety and wholeness. It was developed as part of an ecumenical task force with Church World Service.

A Note on White Supremacy and White Privilege

The history of U.S. immigration law and policy is a history of white preference and dominance. Western Europeans were preferred over Eastern Europeans. Both were preferred over Southern Europeans. Asians, though brought to this nation when their labor was convenient for white U.S. interests, were deeply discriminated against with the Chinese Exclusion Act and Japanese Internment. Most Asians, though members of this nation for generations, were not allowed to naturalize under the law until 1952. African-Americans were taken and brought to the U.S. by force from their homelands and their families and enslaved. Though free persons after the civil war and purportedly allowed to vote under the 15th amendment of the U.S. Constitution in 1870, many African Americans did not enjoy the right to vote until the Voting Rights Act of 1965. **Please use the resources in the Peacemaking Guide's section on race to supplement your study of immigration.** The patterns we have created as a nation to seek justice, to gain access to resources, and to connect as people are all subconsciously and consciously controlled by a deep pattern of white preference and dominance. It is only through mindful study and growing awareness that we can live in right relationship with one another.



DIRECT ACTION AND ADVOCACY

There are many ways to become involved.

What will you do?

Immigration law and policy, though carried out in our local communities, are made at the federal level. Congressional advocacy is key in making your impact on the laws and policies that affect the lives of those on the move, those visiting and those who have made the U.S. their home. The Office of Immigration Issues updates congressional advocacy needs each year and, alongside the Washington Office of Public Witness, have created [tools](#) to use to organize groups to visit their representatives.

1. Write your elected leaders in Congress urging them to support legislation that supports immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Copy your letters to elected local and state leaders.
2. Host a film screening and follow-up discussion that is open to the community or organize a community educational series with local partners.
3. Pray regularly for all impacted by current immigration practices.
4. Volunteer with local organizations who work with refugees and immigrants.
5. Open your church property to outside groups to host meetings or immigration legal services.
6. Join an immigrant advocacy coalition.
7. Volunteer with organizations along the U.S. border and then share your learnings when you return home.
8. Become a sponsor to accompany an asylum seeker.
9. Organize a welcome team to accompany a resettled refugee or provide basic needs.
10. Give financial support to an immigrant-led or immigrant-serving organization.

Not sure where to begin?

1. Request a tour of a local immigration detention center.
2. Visit a local program/nonprofit.
3. Invite a refugee or immigrant leader to speak to your congregation.
4. Reach out to an immigrant-led faith community to start a dialogue, share a meal, visit each other's worship or prayer service.








YEARLY REVIEW WORKSHEET

for the Commitment to Peacemaking Companion Guide

YEAR _____

Area of Emphasis: Poverty Violence Racism Climate Change Immigration/Migration

Section of the Companion Guide	Resources Used	Actions Taken	Challenges	Lessons Learned	Next Steps
 Worship					
 Spiritual Grounding & Reflection					
 Community Partnerships					
 Study & Preparation					
 Direct Action & Advocacy					

How did you experience intersectionality between your chosen area of emphasis and the other four areas?

Is your congregation continuing with the chosen area of emphasis? Yes No

If no, what is your new area of emphasis? _____



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QUESTIONS?

If you have questions about the *Commitment to Peacemaking* or the Companion Guide, please email the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program at peacemaking@presbyterianmission.org. You can also call our office directly at **502-569-5805**.



Presbyterian Mission
**Presbyterian
Peacemaking Program**

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