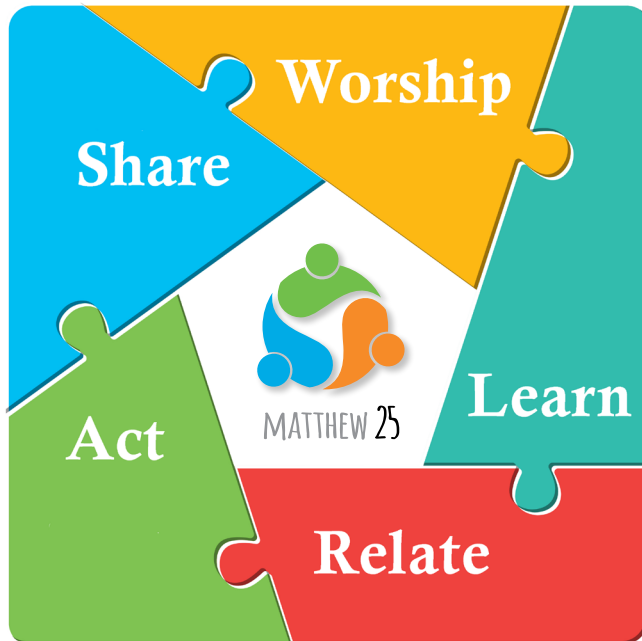




## Five Spiritual Practices to End Poverty



**Five Spiritual Practices to End Poverty**

*As disciples of Jesus Christ, Presbyterians engage in multiple components of a holistic effort to eradicate systemic poverty, address its root causes and build communities of well-being. With God's help, together we can work to eradicate systemic poverty if we:*

**Worship:** In our worship, prayers and faith life, we incorporate confessional, biblical, theological and ecclesial understandings of poverty.

**Learn:** In our Christian education and personal learning, we seek to understand the intersectional, systemic and root causes of poverty.

**Relate:** We engage in genuine, humble, mutual and equitable relationships across divisions, social status and groups as Jesus modeled.

**Act:** We prioritize listening to, and responding alongside, communities as they identify needs, organize for solutions and engage in advocacy for change.

**Share:** Recognizing that all gifts come from God and are to be shared, we share financial, building, time and other resources to create fair access and to right historical harms.



## Action Suggestions

While congregations will have myriad ways and various entry points to engage ministries, relationships and programs to eradicate poverty, this list provides a few salient options for a congregation that is looking for suggestions of how they might embody the call to Matthew 25 ministries. This list was compiled in the spring of 2022 by a collaborative team of denominational staff and mid council leaders.

**WORSHIP:** In our worship, prayers and faith life, we incorporate confessional, biblical, theological and ecclesial understandings of poverty.

- Begin to reach out, listen, build relationships and open conversations with other congregations and community partners to explore some possible **shared worship times** together around eradicating poverty and building communities of well-being.
- **Play short videos** to explore the complexity of poverty, during sermon, prayers of the people or minute for mission.
  - ◆ Poor People's Campaign, "Pain and Poverty in America": [pcusa.info/painandpoverty](http://pcusa.info/painandpoverty).
  - ◆ Matthew 25 videos: [presbyterianmission.org/ministries/matthew-25/matt-25-resources](http://presbyterianmission.org/ministries/matthew-25/matt-25-resources).
  - ◆ One Great Hour of Sharing programs' videos, trailers and clips:
    - Self-Development of People [pcusa.info/sdopvideos](http://pcusa.info/sdopvideos).
    - Presbyterian Hunger Program [pcusa.info/hungerprogramvideos](http://pcusa.info/hungerprogramvideos).
    - Presbyterian Disaster Assistance [pda.pcusa.org/situation/story-productions](http://pda.pcusa.org/situation/story-productions) and [vimeo.com/pdacares](http://vimeo.com/pdacares).
  - ◆ Peruse the World Mission video playlist ([pcusa.info/WorldMissionvideos](http://pcusa.info/WorldMissionvideos)) and this recent video about the work in Latin American and the Caribbean ([youtube.com/watch?v=45EhlwPHIAA&t=62s](https://youtube.com/watch?v=45EhlwPHIAA&t=62s)).

- Include **specific acts of dedication** related to poverty eradication at set times (such as fifth Sundays, communion Sundays, etc).

- ◆ Consider using assertions on what we believe about poverty eradication as affirmation of faith or other liturgical components.
- ◆ Include advocacy as part of worship through things such as Bread for the World's "offering of letters" [bread.org/offering-letters](http://bread.org/offering-letters).
- ◆ Collect items requested by local nonprofits (such as food, diapers, school supplies, winter clothes).
- ◆ After hearing from a local movement or organization through a minute for mission, continue to raise support and awareness of that group.

**LEARN:** In our Christian education and personal learning, we seek to understand the intersectional, systemic and root causes of poverty.

- **Invite local partner organizations** to speak to the congregation about the root causes of poverty that they seek to address, for Sunday school, Wednesday night suppers, etc. Be mindful that you might want to expand your circle of local partners working to end poverty, to include unexpected partners like the health department or a school of social work. Be mindful of which partners you can invest longer-term relationship building in, and which you are hosting simply to unpack some complexities around poverty in your region as a one-time educational event. Be clear what compensation or honorarium might be offered for speaking engagements versus what relationships/partnership work might grow out of connections.



## Action Suggestions

- **Offer simulation activities** and other active learning models. Be mindful to include “now what” or “next steps” to engage participants in some type of action that stems from the learning activity (i.e., a local organization to support, a local or national piece of legislation to call decision-makers about, etc.)
  - ◆ Racial wealth gap simulation from Bread for the World, [bread.org/library/racial-wealth-gap-learning-simulation](http://bread.org/library/racial-wealth-gap-learning-simulation).
  - ◆ The PC(USA) Africa game about children’s education challenges, contact World Mission’s Africa Office at 800-728-7228, ext. 5031. Read more at [presbyterianmission.org/story/helping-africas-children-pns](http://presbyterianmission.org/story/helping-africas-children-pns).
  - ◆ Use Hunger meal simulations to raise awareness and discuss hunger concerns. For suggested outlines of such meals, email [php@pcusa.org](mailto:php@pcusa.org).
  - ◆ For more traditional learning opportunities, see PMA Resources on Poverty for suggested study guides, curriculum and books.
- **Attend visits/travel delegations** to other communities (local or global) to raise understanding and build relationships, being mindful not to be in a tourist mindset but to enter into space as a learner willing to be transformed in order to act to end poverty
  - ◆ Presbyterian Peacemaking Program travel delegations, Feb. 3–17, 2023, Hong Kong and Philippines with a focus on forced migration and labor trafficking; March 13–20, 2023, to Puerto Rico, and April 28–May 7, 2023, with a focus on native lands in the American Southwest.
  - ◆ Find upcoming campaigns or rallies for state or national Poor People’s Campaign.
  - ◆ Use the map on the One Great Hour of Sharing page to locate partners that may be willing to receive visits.

**RELATE:** We engage in genuine, humble, mutual and equitable relationships across divisions, social status and groups as Jesus modeled.

- Study and then practice **models of community organizing and/or asset-based community development**.
  - ◆ Asset-based community development: ABCD Institute | DePaul University, Chicago.
  - ◆ Church-based community development, connected to community health evangelism, is explained here: Church-based community development - Tearfund Learn.
  - ◆ A program on faith-based community development is offered here: [northwindseminary.org/fbcd-degree](http://northwindseminary.org/fbcd-degree).
  - ◆ Clergy Leadership in Faith-Rooted Organizing: An Introduction – one-hour course from Faith in Action: [learn.faithinaction.org](http://learn.faithinaction.org).
  - ◆ Organizing for Justice: Essential Skills – four-day training from the Midwest Academy: [midwestacademy.com/training](http://midwestacademy.com/training).
  - ◆ Contact [php@pcusa.org](mailto:php@pcusa.org) or visit [presbyterianmission.org/cbco](http://presbyterianmission.org/cbco) to learn more about Congregation Based Community Organizing.
- Broaden your **outreach to new partners** to address poverty from a variety of angles/coalitions: consider the health department; schools of public health or schools of social work; mental health agencies; social service providers; social justice movement leaders.
  - ◆ To think about how to listen to and relate to your neighbors, and consider who are our neighbors, use tools, suggestions and resources from A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood: Mr. Rogers Day: [presbyterianmission.org/resource/a-beautiful-day-in-the-neighborhood-mr-rogers-day](http://presbyterianmission.org/resource/a-beautiful-day-in-the-neighborhood-mr-rogers-day).



## Action Suggestions

- **Join a facilitated small group** working on ending poverty; learn about issues and possible actions together.

- ◆ Peacemaking Program cohorts are forming soon. Contact [peacemaking@pcusa.org](mailto:peacemaking@pcusa.org).

**ACT:** We prioritize listening to, and responding alongside, communities as they identify needs, organize for solutions and engage in advocacy for change.

- **Identify trusted, community-based, anti-poverty local organizations and leaders** to join their campaigns and follow their lead on calls to actions and community meetings — not just politicians, but school social workers, health-care providers, community organizers, pastors in different denominations and various sectors of the community.

- ◆ Consider joining a community organizing entity. Some suggestions include Direct Action & Research Training Center Inc. (DART) in 10 states, Industrial Areas Foundation in 24 states, or Faith in Action in multiple locations.
- ◆ Consider joining the organizing efforts in your state with the Poor People's Campaign.

- **Advocate for legislation** that helps to end poverty locally, in your state, nationally or internationally. Be mindful not to assume we know what is best — let action arise from listening to and building relationships with impacted communities. Choose advocacy that best suits your congregation and set a goal to follow it for the length of time that makes sense. Reflect along the way.

- ◆ National foci recommended as legislative priorities by the Poor People's Campaign include many that have Presbyterian policy and programming history, such as Guaranteed Minimum Wage, Voting Rights/ Civil Rights and Immigration Reform. Choose one or more of the PPC priorities as your focus. For Presbyterian policy connections, see the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy.

- ◆ Global legislation advocacy, recommended by Bread for the World, could focus on the Global Nutrition Act.

- ◆ Office of Public Witness action alerts are available at [votervoicenet.org/PCUSA/campaigns](http://votervoicenet.org/PCUSA/campaigns).

- **Adopt a focused campaign** to address root causes of poverty in your community and across the country:

- ◆ **“End Cash Bail”** to stop those who are poor from having more impacts of the criminal justice system than those who can afford bail easily. Contribute to the Bail Project: [bailproject.org](http://bailproject.org). Read about Presbyterian involvement: [pcusa.org/news/2019/6/12/louisville-area-presbyterians-and-their-friends-ra](http://pcusa.org/news/2019/6/12/louisville-area-presbyterians-and-their-friends-ra).
- ◆ **“We Choose Welcome”** to support refugees in our community. Posters, resources and suggestions for advocacy are at [presbyterianmission.org/we-choose-welcome](http://presbyterianmission.org/we-choose-welcome). Download an action guide at [presbyterianmission.org/resource/choose-welcome-action-guide](http://presbyterianmission.org/resource/choose-welcome-action-guide).
- ◆ **“Support Affordable Housing”** through community organizing, funding local affordable housing trust funds in your city, and working through local nonprofit organizations. To learn more and/or to connect to models of community organizing working on affordable housing, visit [pcusa.org/cbco](http://pcusa.org/cbco), or watch a seven-minute video about housing and Matthew 25 commitments at [youtube.com/watch?v=c8EuFMPLJkM](https://youtube.com/watch?v=c8EuFMPLJkM).



## Action Suggestions

- ◆ **“Support Fair Food and Farmworkers”** through standing with the Alliance for Fair Food and the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, a long-standing Presbyterian partnership.

**SHARE:** Recognizing that all gifts come from God and are to be shared, we share financial, building, time and other resources to create fair access and to right historical harms.

- **Plan and then host congregational asset-mapping** to know what assets you have to share in the community
  - ◆ Use the Alban Institute worksheet for congregational asset-mapping.
  - ◆ Consider using a version of asset-mapping to map assets in the community as well, and to see what ways your congregation can companion, with cultural humility, for co-development (concepts in the book “Freeing Congregation Mission” by Farrell & Khylllep).
  - ◆ Take the IDI to help be mindful and reflective of issues of diversity, equity and justice in relationships and plans: [idiinventory.com](http://idiinventory.com).
- **Volunteer in the community to address community needs:** hunger, education, access to transportation, employment, hunger, tutoring, providing meals, offer space for community organizations and needs as appropriate.
  - ◆ If needed, use a mission discernment resource, such as “Finding Your Mission Focus”: [presbyterianmission.org/ministries/world-mission/mission-resources/mission-toolkits/mission-committee-toolkit/mission-committee-toolkit-learn](http://presbyterianmission.org/ministries/world-mission/mission-resources/mission-toolkits/mission-committee-toolkit/mission-committee-toolkit-learn).
  - Host or support a Summer Food Service Program: [fns.usda.gov/sfsp/summer-food-service-program](http://fns.usda.gov/sfsp/summer-food-service-program).
  - Start or participate in a community garden or host a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture); learn more in Food Sovereignty for All: [presbyterianmission.org/](http://presbyterianmission.org/)

[resource/food-sovereignty-all](http://resource/food-sovereignty-all).

- ◆ Support a feeding program with volunteers and/or financial support, or run one yourself. Soup kitchen: [endhungerinamerica.org/publications/mission-possible](http://endhungerinamerica.org/publications/mission-possible). Food pantry: [networks.whyhunger.org](http://networks.whyhunger.org). Other: Meals on Wheels, Backpack Program, etc.
- ◆ Share information about how community members can connect with food, housing, health and emergency service providers. Visit [211.org](http://211.org) or call 211, or gather and share a resource list of providers in your own community.
- Give to **restorative efforts**, organizations and movements to end poverty and build communities of well-being in your area or through the PC(USA).
  - ◆ [restorativeactions.org](http://restorativeactions.org) will receive the General Assembly offering, recommended by co-moderators.
  - ◆ Special Offerings support communities and people in particular situations of need.
  - ◆ World Mission global initiatives on poverty alleviation.
  - ◆ Community organizations and social movements in your area.



## Core Principles

Core principles guide and align our work with our beliefs and incorporate lessons learned from our partners. Why might examining and adopting core principles, as you continue or begin a new initiative, partnership or accompaniment be helpful? Are there principles not included here that are important for your context?

In our work, we actively discern God's guidance to help us embody the abundant, beloved community that we believe that God desires. We do that by the ways we listen, observe, question our own assumptions, set objectives and then practice the work, recognizing that how we are "showing up" matters as much as what we are doing.

Presbyterians working to eradicate poverty and to build sustainable communities commit ourselves to:

**1. Be present with, listen to and be led by those who live in impacted communities,** trusting that God moves, speaks in and provides communities with the skills and solutions to their challenges.

*Practices and approaches:*

- We learn and practice cultural humility and mutuality and commit to examine and transform some of our own preconceived notions that perpetuate cycles and systems of poverty.
- We listen to how those living with poverty view their challenges, if there is a desire for accompaniment and what appropriate roles in a partnership or accompaniment might look like.
- We create spaces to listen to how those who live with poverty view the best solutions/actions and are willing to change focus accordingly.
- When welcomed to do so, we highlight the work of partners to share models of community empowerment and hope.
- We work together to clarify how decision-making, strategizing and resource distribution will work.
- We recognize leadership from community partners fighting against poverty, honoring their time and availability.
- We ask for feedback from impacted communities to evaluate the partnership in which we engage, and act on recommended changes.

- We set objectives and evaluate the impact of the work together with the participants of the partnership, initiative or accompaniment participants.
- We support personal and community ownership of images, stories, and solutions rather than appropriating or sharing them without permission and attribution.

**2. Seek equity and diversity in leadership,** believing that the early church in Acts and the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in our world affirm the necessity and vitality of multiple voices within the Body of Christ. Therefore, we will pay special attention to seek out the leadership of those who have been traditionally left out or marginalized and make sure they are at the decision-making tables.

*Practices and approaches:*

- a. Diverse voices of those who are fighting against poverty, have experienced poverty and have established/respectful/mutual relationships with those living with poverty are centralized in the decision-making, planning, staffing and coordination of any initiatives, partnerships or accompaniment efforts.
- b. Leadership is prioritized of those who have historically been disenfranchised, including women, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and people of color), and LGBTQIA+ community leaders and movement organizers.



## Core Principles

**3. Learn about systems, structures and practices that perpetuate poverty,** knowing that Jesus asked questions that turned traditional understandings upside down, used stories to help challenge accepted ways of thinking and continues to invite us into deeper understandings of situations than what may first appear.

*Practices and approaches:*

- We recognize that individual choices are important and also recognize that systemic poverty cannot be reduced to individual behavior, nor can it be adequately addressed with individualized solutions.
- We pay attention to the intersectionality of poverty with race, gender, class, ability, nationality, age, immigration status and other markers of social location.
- We look at our denominational doctrines, traditions, theology, worship practices, policies, and scriptural interpretation through the lens of people living with poverty.
- We collaborate, network with, and include ecumenical and interfaith perspectives and resources on eradicating systemic poverty.
- We assert that poverty is not inevitable and we are called as people of faith to dismantle systems that perpetuate poverty.

**Drawn from:**

The Poor People's Campaign; Soul Fire Farm equity principles; Jemez Principles; US Food Sovereignty Alliance adaptation of Jemez Principles; Faith in Action resource books



## Assessment Questions

*As we continue our work of eradicating systemic poverty as a church with the Matthew 25 vision, we want to be mindful and reflective of our own ways that we enter plans, projects and programs — knowing that sometimes we may unintentionally start down a wrong path because of our positions of privilege and power and that we will need to stay mindful to correct course, accept feedback and adapt as needed. We will bear the following questions in mind as we work to eradicate systemic poverty, so that we are continually assessing our attempts as we go along.*

1. How does our engagement show that we understand God's call to see Christ in those living with poverty, and that we are convinced that our Christian faith calls us to work to eradicate systems and structures that keep people and communities poor?
2. How do we demonstrate that we understand that unfettered consumption, the accumulation, consolidation and competition of natural resources, and the love of wealth are root causes of poverty, and how does our work address the problem of wealth in addition to the eradication of poverty? What role does honest confession and repentance play in our project/process?
3. How does our process/project address "root causes" of poverty and the various interlocking systemic/structural justice issues therein?
4. To what extent have we made efforts to be very clear about the end goal and agendas of all partners/participants, so as to reduce confusion or mixed signals?
5. If an initiative, project or partnership relies on the expertise and time of community partners, have we been clear and transparent about possible compensation and fair expectations of those engaging in this effort together?
6. Is our work to eradicate systemic poverty attempting to right past wrongs and repair historic harm, understanding that historic harm continues to have present-day unjust impacts? (i.e., do we operate based on the understanding that communities living in poverty have had resources unfairly extracted from them and therefore their current lack of economic resources is in direct proportion to another's profit? Or, do we think of ourselves as "doing for," "being generous" or "offering charity"?)
7. Do we include the leadership, meaningful participation, and consent of women, people of color, non-English speakers, immigrants, people without college degrees, those in rural areas and the Deep South, and others disadvantaged or oppressed by society?
8. What processes do we have for participants, consulting partners and communities to give honest evaluation of our work? Are there things standing in the way from us getting honest assessment of the work?
9. When we receive constructive criticism from a community partner or consulting partner, how have we adjusted the content and direction of our process/project?
10. To what extent are we interested in and committed to being changed, transformed, affected and inspired, versus one-directional learning?

**Drawn from:**

Poor People's Campaign, Soul Fire Farm equity principles, Jemez Principles, US Food Sovereignty Alliance adaptation of Jemez Principles, *Faith in Action* resource books





# Faith Assertions

These seven assertions ground our work to end systemic poverty in the biblical tradition, our Reformed theology, our confessional heritage and our Presbyterian policies. They can be used together or separately to lay a foundation for your congregation's anti-poverty work. Incorporate them in worship liturgically as a "declaration of faith," include them in newsletters, post them on your church's website, and distribute them to poverty study and discussion groups.

**We believe** God calls us to work to end poverty and to create communities of well-being. We believe that God created the world and called it good; that the earth belongs to God; that God tasked the first humans with serving and preserving God's Creation; and that the prophets called again and again for God's people to seek well-being and justice for all people.

**We believe** Jesus Christ models how we are to live in community and to confront systems of injustice, including poverty. Jesus Christ taught us to care for the vulnerable, to be a good neighbor and to provide food to the hungry. Christ came to proclaim good news to the poor. Jesus Christ came not to condemn the world, but to save it.

**We believe** the Holy Spirit inspires, motivates and guides all faithful work to eradicate poverty and build communities of well-being. The early Christians supported sharing things in common for the good of all. Throughout the centuries, Christian hospitality has included providing food and shelter. In the Lord's Prayer, we pray for God's kingdom to come "on earth" as it is in heaven, and we believe the Spirit works in the world to make this so.

**We declare** that poverty is not a personal problem but a corporate sin and that "a church that is indifferent to poverty, or evades responsibility in economic affairs, or is open to one social class only ... offers no acceptable worship to God. ... Enslaving poverty in a world of abundance is an intolerable violation of God's good creation." (PC[USA] Confessions of 1967)

**We declare** that "We Presbyterians evaluate any economic system not simply on the basis of the material goods and services it provides, but especially on the basis of its human consequences: what it is doing to, with and for people, particularly the most vulnerable among us. In our tradition, economic behavior, like all behavior, must be subject to moral scrutiny. For this reason, the church must speak to the present economic crisis, to the devastation it has brought, and to the hope to which we bear witness: that, in Christ, a more just order is arising." ("Living Through Economic Crisis," 219th General Assembly (2010))

**We repent** that Christians have misunderstood or been misled by biblical passages taken out of context or by theological interpretations that distort the gospel's original intention. We repent that the church has used Scripture to uphold systems that perpetuate oppression and poverty. We do not believe that "the poor will always be with us" indicates poverty is inevitable or God's will. We do not believe that "blessed are the poor in spirit" indicates it is a blessing to lack economic sufficiency or basic human rights. We do not believe in a prosperity gospel in which God blesses faithful people with economic riches and condemns unfaithful people to poverty.

**We advocate** for global economic justice through a range of strategies and approaches including racial, gender and environmental justice, care for refugees and immigrants, guaranteed minimum wages and full employment, support for programs that meet the needs of women and children, and welfare reform that neither requires "workfare" nor punishes the poor. In our advocacy, we ensure that the voices of impoverished people enable us to discern and address the root causes of poverty.



## Strategic Domestic Partners



**The Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) Fair Food Program** is a unique partnership among farmers, farmworkers and retail food companies that ensures humane wages and working conditions for the workers who pick fruits and vegetables on participating farms. Through the Campaign for Fair Food, the PC(USA) joins many faith bodies across the country to accompany the Coalition of Immokalee farmworkers in the struggle for a more just and sustainable food system. Visit [ciw-online.org](http://ciw-online.org) to find ways you and your congregation can be involved in this farmworker-driven, consumer-powered initiative.



**The Poor People’s Campaign:** A National Call for Moral Revival is uniting people across the country to challenge the evils of systemic racism, poverty, the war economy,

ecological devastation and the nation’s distorted moral narrative of religious nationalism. The Poor People’s Campaign has established 14 Priorities as the basis for its campaign of advocacy for justice and equity in the United States. It calls for the “dismantling of unjust criminalization systems that exploit poor communities and communities of color and the transformation of the ‘War Economy’ into a ‘Peace Economy’ that values all humanity.” The PC(USA) supports the Poor People’s Campaign by sitting on the Prophetic Council, which offers leadership to events and distributes info; speaking at events and participating in rallies and press conferences; and distributing communications throughout the PC(USA).

[poorpeoplescampaign.org](http://poorpeoplescampaign.org)



**Jubilee USA** works on debt, tax, trade and transparency policies that help end poverty. From resolving Puerto Rico’s financial crisis to corporate transparency to student debt, Jubilee USA wins solutions that impact lives and the global community. Some critical issues require a global approach, and the PC(USA) has learned from and partnered with the Jubilee USA Network for more than two decades, beginning with our successful Jubilee 2000 Campaign, which challenged international debt rules and resulted in billions of dollars saved by poor nations around the world. Learn more here: [https://www.jubileeusa.org/the\\_jubilee\\_story](https://www.jubileeusa.org/the_jubilee_story)



## Strategic Global Partners

### Global partners working to eradicate poverty and create thriving communities



*A woman in San Juan Ostuncalco harvests radishes for the seed project. Credit: CEDEPCA*



*The MECC's Diakonia Department distributes seeds to farmers in Syria. Credit: MECC*

#### **CEDEPCA (Protestant Center for Pastoral Studies in Central America), Guatemala**

CEDEPCA is an independent ecumenical institution serving Central America's churches. CEDEPCA encourages theological reflection and pastoral practice that is evangelical, contextual, liberating and ecumenical. CEDEPCA has a number of outstanding programs within its four focus areas: Biblical and Theological Formation; Women's Ministry; Disaster Ministry; and Intercultural Encounters. CEDEPCA has helped thousands of U.S. Presbyterians to understand the challenges that Latin American Christians confront and to reflect on their own lives through the faith experiences of these members of Christ's global family. The PC(USA) has had a long-standing relationship with CEDEPCA through Presbyterian World Mission and mission co-workers as well as through the Presbyterian Ministries of the Self-Development of People, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, Presbyterian Hunger Program and Presbyterian Peacemaking Program. [cedepca.org/en](http://cedepca.org/en)

#### **Middle East Council of Churches (MECC), Lebanon**

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has been a strong partner and supporter of the work of the MECC since its inception in 1974. The council includes all four families of churches in the Middle East, i.e., the Eastern Orthodox Churches, the Oriental (non-Calcedonian) Orthodox Churches, the Catholic Churches (Latin and Eastern Rites), and the Evangelical Churches (Reformed, Episcopal, Lutheran and Congregational). With headquarters in Lebanon, it includes churches in Cyprus, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Palestine and Syria. It works on issues of church unity, ecumenical and interfaith dialogue, advocacy for justice, peace and human rights, education, participation of youth, women and children, and Palestinian refugees and other displaced persons. PC(USA) relates to MECC through Presbyterian World Mission, the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, and the Office of Public Witness. <https://www.mecc.org>



## Strategic Global Partners



*The PCC promotes gardens of peace, eco-farms and other ecologically centered models. Credit: PCC*

### **Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC), Fiji**

Through Presbyterian World Mission and mission co-workers, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance and more recently with the Presbyterian Hunger Program, Presbyterians are learning and working alongside the PCC. Formed in 1961, the PCC is a broad ecumenical platform with 30 member churches and eight national councils of churches spanning 18 countries and territories. Key concerns for PCC include climate change and rising sea levels, environmental protection, decolonization and self-determination, overfishing, climate-induced migration, hunger and poverty, and the empowerment of women, young people and people living with disabilities. The PCC has deep knowledge of issues affecting the Pacific region, speaks with a prophetic voice, and sits in spaces where important decisions are made. [pacificconferenceofchurches.org](http://pacificconferenceofchurches.org)



*PRODEK Director Medi Kanda demonstrating an oil press machine, part of the seed, market, agricultural and equipment training provided by the organization. Credit: Valery Nodem*

### **PRODEK (Programme de Développement du Kasai), Democratic Republic of Congo**

PRODEK, a faith-based organization related to the Presbyterian Community of Congo (CPC), has worked in partnership with the PC(USA) for more than three decades to seek improved socio-economic conditions for the people of the Greater Kasai region through food security, community health and environmental protection. The Presbyterian Hunger Program and Presbyterian World Mission have accompanied PRODEK in developing the organizational, technical, socio-political and economic abilities of farming communities to promote self-determination. Since 2018, due to recurring humanitarian crises in the East Kasai that have killed thousands and displaced tens of thousands of people, PHP has supported PRODEK's work of helping returnees to rebuild their lives by providing them seeds and tools to enable them to regain self-reliance.



## Strategic Global Partners



*Local community members of one of the grain banks that RELUFA has helped to establish. Credit: Valery Nodem*

### **RELUFA (Reseau De Lutte Contre La Faim), Cameroon**

Begun in 2001 as part of the Joining Hands initiative of the Presbyterian Hunger Program, RELUFA formed as network connecting diverse nongovernmental organizations and church organizations to identify and address root causes of hunger and poverty, recognizing there is often a global component to such issues. Programs include campaigning against land grabbing practices and trade injustice, supporting community-managed grain banks to combat seasonal hunger and deepening cycles of debt, and campaigning for transparency in the extractive industries so civil society can hold governments accountable more effectively. RELUFA has fought injustices caused by oil, gas and mining companies in Cameroon, as well as companies buying massive amounts of land and evicting communities that depend on them for their survival. They have won some victories along the way and are currently supporting community struggles and making proposals to the government to reform the land tenure system in Cameroon. RELUFA's leader has been a Presbyterian International Peacemaker.

[relufa.org](http://relufa.org)



# Frequently Asked Questions

## What is “systemic” poverty?

Systemic poverty refers to the economic exploitation of people who are poor through laws, policies, practices and systems that perpetuate their impoverished status. We live in a world where not all have equal access to education, transportation, fresh food, financial resources, clean air, water or healthy environments, employment with a living wage, health care, benefits, citizenship and affordable housing. This lack of access creates generational cycles of poverty and a racial wealth gap that are systemic in nature. An individual cannot change their economic and social location easily by just “working harder.” Meanwhile the many, interlocking disadvantages often are compounded by choices to stay near family or a particular location or employment opportunity, or by gender and racial injustice, trauma, violence, immigration status, impacts from climate change and environmental degradation and other complicating issues.

## Why are people poor?

Individuals are economically poor for diverse, complicated and unique reasons that stem from living in a world in which economic policies and practices trap some people in persistent poverty while enabling others to accumulate wealth. Wealth or profit often accrues on one side of the equation, often precisely because on the other side of the equation laborers are not paid fair wages, given health or safety protections, employed full-time or long-term, offered benefits, or given voice, power or influence.

## Why can’t people work themselves out of poverty?

In the United States, social safety nets and government programs to provide food, housing assistance, health care and employment often fail to meet basic needs and do not provide adequate or equitable access to these resources. Poverty is also often compounded by where a person is born and lives — certain geographic regions, communities and neighborhoods cannot easily access resources that could improve their situations. Around the world, international trade deals, government corruption, armed conflict and climate change exacerbate conditions of poverty. While

there is no simple or easy solution, we do know that communities can become safer, happier and have an increased sense of well-being when they have vision, leadership and find allies in their quest self-empowered sustainable development.

**SUGGESTION:** Watch “Pain and Poverty in America,” a five-minute video created by the Poor People’s Campaign that takes a close look at what it means to live with a low income or in poverty in the United States. [youtu.be/zj5aVF54p-0](https://youtu.be/zj5aVF54p-0).

## How big a problem is poverty, really?

Poverty is a very real and very large hurdle to well-being, safety and health in our country and our world. In the United States, 1 in 5 children lives in poverty. Nearly half a million Americans do not have a safe home to go to at the end of the day. Further, more than one in seven people in the U.S. lives below the poverty line, an income of \$25,750 for a family of four (HHS Poverty Guidelines, 2019). More than 65 million people worldwide have become refugees, displaced from their homes. Globally, the number of people facing hunger increased by roughly 118 million from 2019 to 2020. Nearly 1.2 billion people in developing countries live in extreme poverty, living on less than \$1.25 a day. While we often depict this as a “poverty problem,” Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty points out in her book *The Problem of Wealth: A Christian Response to a Culture of Affluence* that we actually have a problem of wealth. Unfettered consumerism, savage exploitation of natural resources, wealth accumulation, inequitable distribution of goods, services and labor, climate change and economic control by the powerful — those are also root causes of poverty and the impoverishment of the environment. Moreover, many of our global partners take a more multidimensional view of poverty, one that recognizes that well-being is based on access to social, spiritual and cultural resources and not simply financial ones.



## Frequently Asked Questions

### **How can I help? What should I do?**

We can participate together — equitably, humbly and mutually — with communities imagining, demanding and creating their well-being. We begin by being present in community, listening and building trusting relationships. Following the lead of people in the midst of circumstances they wish to change, we can be partners in transforming systems and structures that divide communities. We do this believing that God calls us to love one another, to care for the world, and to be a part of God's liberating redemption for all. We are all connected and our well-being is interdependent.

While there is some short-term work that can be helpful, we are invited to consider long-term, systemic work to change ideologies, policies, laws or practices that keep people poor and other people rich also to work to heal and repair historical harm. This longer-term work invites us to engage in advocacy, denouncing poverty systems perpetuated by our governments and demanding significant policy changes to end poverty and create community well-being.

For Presbyterians, we are inviting the church to consider incorporating commitments to end systemic poverty and create communities of well-being through 5 Spiritual Practices. We will attend to these concerns as we: Worship, Learn, Relate, Act, Share. For more information see 5 Spiritual Practices to End Poverty ([hyperlink/URL](#)).

### **How can I talk with my children about poverty?**

Children understand when things are unfair. They can hear that God made us all and loves every person and creature on earth, and that God wishes for all people and creatures to thrive. We all deserve well-being and peace, safety and security, shelter and food. Things are unfair not because someone isn't just as wonderful and worthy as someone else. And things aren't uneven because some people do not work as hard or because they are uneducated (many people work very hard, and even multiple jobs, but still live in poverty). Things are unfair because we humans wrestle with things like greed, pride, envy, gluttony. It's like taking all the toys for yourself and never sharing, but then blaming it on the kids who got their toys taken from them. It's like setting up a game and making the rules so that only you can win. That's not how God wants us to live. The good part is, because the hurt comes from people, and we also are people with hearts and brains and the desire for things to be fair, we can work to be part of the solution. We can change the rules (which we call laws and policies), and we can redistribute the toys (opportunities for good quality education, employment, health care, affordable housing, healthy food, etc.). We do this by sharing some things right now (giving away food, helping to build housing, donating in times of a disaster), while also working to change the rules of who gets what, to make a difference in the future (by voting and lifting up our voices for what we think is right).



## Engaging Spiritual Practices for eradicating systemic poverty

### WORSHIP & SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

- Use denominational resources to explore root causes of poverty, hunger and homelessness on Self-Development of People Sunday (March; [pcusa.org/sdopsunday](http://pcusa.org/sdopsunday)) or on Hunger and Homelessness Sunday (November; [pcusa.org/homelessness](http://pcusa.org/homelessness)) or another time throughout the year.
- Incorporate resources from the Book of Confessions, Book of Order, Book of Common Worship and the Glory to God hymnal ([pcusa.org/on-poverty](http://pcusa.org/on-poverty)) or from the Accra Confession ([pcusa.org/accra](http://pcusa.org/accra)) into worship and liturgy.
- Draw ideas from the Poverty and Liturgy issue of “Call to Worship: Liturgy, Music, Preaching, and the Arts” 54.3 (2020) at [pcusa.org/poverty-liturgy](http://pcusa.org/poverty-liturgy), including
  - ♦ “On Liturgy: Responding to Poverty according to the Liturgical Narrative,” by Kendra Buckwalter Smith.
  - ♦ “On Music: Privilege, Poverty and Musical Practice,” by Phillip Morgan.
  - ♦ “On Preaching: Blessed Are the Poor ... in Spirit?” by Buz Wilcoxon.
  - ♦ “On the Arts: Poverty and Liturgy,” by Lauren Wright Pittman.

Check with your POINT representative or presbytery resource center to find a copy of the issue. Subscribe to “Call to Worship,” in print: [pcusastore.com/call-to-worship-book](http://pcusastore.com/call-to-worship-book), or download: [pcusastore.com/call-to-worship-download](http://pcusastore.com/call-to-worship-download).

### LEARN

- Join the Hunger Action Congregation ([pcusa.org/hac](http://pcusa.org/hac)) program to engage your church in six areas of church life to end hunger and address its root causes ([pcusa.org/endlunger](http://pcusa.org/endlunger)).
- Personally or with a small group, use the Study and Devotional Guide created by the Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations that explores the globally recognized Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) ([pcusa.org/sustainable-development-goals](http://pcusa.org/sustainable-development-goals)).

[pcusa.org/sustainable-development-goals](http://pcusa.org/sustainable-development-goals)).

- Explore the poverty section of the Commitment to Peacemaking Companion Guide to focus a year of church-life on poverty ([presbyterianmission.org/companionguide](http://presbyterianmission.org/companionguide)).

### CONNECT & RELATE

- Explore how to relate well to local partners, and prepare yourself for relationships and mission projects using the “Called as Partners: Serving Together in God’s Mission International Partnership Manual” and mission toolkits ([pcusa.org/partnershipmanual](http://pcusa.org/partnershipmanual), [presbyterianmission.org/mission-toolkits](http://presbyterianmission.org/mission-toolkits)).
- Use Core Principles ([pcusa.org/povertyprinciples](http://pcusa.org/povertyprinciples)) and Assessment Questions ([pcusa.org/povertyworkassessment](http://pcusa.org/povertyworkassessment)) to help guide and evaluate our work to end poverty.
- Pray for, learn about and get connected to our highlighted Matthew 25 domestic and global partners who are working to eradicate systemic poverty:
  - ♦ Domestic partners
    - Poor People’s Campaign
    - Coalition of Immokalee Workers
    - Jubilee USA
  - ♦ Global partners
    - Pacific Conference of Churches
    - CEDEPCA (Protestant Center for Pastoral Studies in Central America)
    - Middle East Council of Churches
    - RELUFA (Reseau De Lutte Contre La Faim, Cameroon)
    - PRODEK (Programme de Développement Est Kasai, Congo)





## PC(USA) Curated Resources

### ACT

- Learn about the model of Congregation Based Community Organizing, hear inspiring stories and connect to possible CBCOs in your area ([pcusa.org/hunger/cbco](http://pcusa.org/hunger/cbco)).
- Use the Holy Discernment toolkit at [pcusa.org/holydiscernment](http://pcusa.org/holydiscernment) from the Office of Public Witness ([pcusa.org/washington](http://pcusa.org/washington)) to explore the biblical roots for our public policy advocacy and engagement in the public square and to learn about Ecumenical Advocacy Days and other advocacy training workshops. Sign up for action alerts that you can take individually and/or share with your congregation at [votervoices.net/pcusa/home](http://votervoices.net/pcusa/home).
- Follow the Educate a Child Toolkit practical tools and starting points for congregations to begin direct service and advocacy for education. Designed to start or amend education-oriented ministry or education advocacy, this toolkit can be used online or downloaded at [presbyterianmission.org/child/toolkit](http://presbyterianmission.org/child/toolkit).

### SHARE

- Connect to and support directly one of our grantee partners through looking at the OGHS map to find a group you may wish to learn more about and support ([specialofferings.pcusa.org/offering/oghs](http://specialofferings.pcusa.org/offering/oghs)) and/or give to global initiatives on poverty alleviation ([presbyterianmission.org/donate/e052143](http://presbyterianmission.org/donate/e052143)).
- Consider how you can practice Mission Responsibility Through Investment with your own congregation's investments, and to see what kinds of social and sustainability screens are recommended when considering our investments ([pcusa.org/mrti](http://pcusa.org/mrti)).
- Share your volunteer time and/or your building space with community organizations
- Consider what reparations might look like in your area ([presbyterianmission.org/resource/report-task-force-reparations](http://presbyterianmission.org/resource/report-task-force-reparations)).

To find PC(USA) speakers, preachers, workshop leaders or conveners of conversations relating to any of these pathways, please contact the following staff who will connect you with someone who can be a resource for your interest area:

Rebecca Barnes, Presbyterian Hunger Program,  
[rebecca.barnes@pcusa.org](mailto:rebecca.barnes@pcusa.org)

Alonzo Johnson, Presbyterian Ministry of the Self-Development of People, [alonzo.johnson@pcusa.org](mailto:alonzo.johnson@pcusa.org)

Carl Horton, Presbyterian Peacemaking Program and Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy, [carl.horton@pcusa.org](mailto:carl.horton@pcusa.org)

Ellen Sherby, Equipping for Mission Involvement, [ellen.sherby@pcusa.org](mailto:ellen.sherby@pcusa.org)



# PC(USA) Additional Resources

## Worship and Spiritual Practice

- Study together the Accra Confession, adopted by World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) 24th General Council in Accra, Ghana (2004), including the PC(USA). This confession is based on the theological conviction that the economic and environmental injustices of today's global economy require the Reformed family to respond as a matter of faith ([pcusa.org/accra](http://pcusa.org/accra)).
- Study and discuss the theological and confessional foundations of PC(USA) policies on Economic Justice ([presbyterianmission.org/acswp/topics](http://presbyterianmission.org/acswp/topics)).
- Watch recorded theological conversations about poverty: "Everyday God-Talk" series episodes with Joerg Rieger ([youtu.be/wkNXkHh6muQ](https://youtu.be/wkNXkHh6muQ)) and Rebecca Barnes ([youtu.be/G8h8\\_2tpmQE](https://youtu.be/G8h8_2tpmQE)), as well as One Great Hour of Sharing programs ([youtube.com/playlist?list=PLrioBAQxlZ1CgkXBAmu7-ok6DHZl4LjOC](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLrioBAQxlZ1CgkXBAmu7-ok6DHZl4LjOC)).
- Journey with the devotional, "30 Days with the Belhar Confession," to tackle poverty and racism as part of our faith ([pcusastore.com/belhar-study](http://pcusastore.com/belhar-study)).
- Engage the "Race and Reconciliation Workbook: The Confession of 1967 and the Belhar Confession" ([pcusastore.com/67-and-Belhar](http://pcusastore.com/67-and-Belhar)).
- Use a Matthew 25 study guide ([pcusa.org/Matthew-25-into-focus](http://pcusa.org/Matthew-25-into-focus)).
- Note and discuss with your worship team the added rubrics in the latest Book of Common Worship: "The presider and elders or deacons prepare the table. The people's offerings, which may include food for people who are hungry, are brought to the table."

## Learn

- Find multiple online video resources and articles to learn about poverty and its intersectional issues at the Unbound online journal and JustTalk Live series ([justiceunbound.org](http://justiceunbound.org)).
- Host a film viewing and discussion with a small group or watch on your own. Most of the films from the Story Ministry Documentary Film Screenings have many ways to relate a discussion on poverty and intersectional causes ([pcusa.org/storyproductions](http://pcusa.org/storyproductions)).

- Listen to the Matter of Faith podcast from Unbound and the Peacemaking Program, particularly episodes 4, 5 and 22 ([amatteroffaith.buzzsprout.com](http://amatteroffaith.buzzsprout.com)).
- Faith in Action study guides help congregations grapple with issues of economic justice, sustainable development and addressing root causes of poverty ([pcusa.org/faithinaction](http://pcusa.org/faithinaction)).
- Call your presbytery office to see if they have a copy of "the Africa game" focused on children's educational challenges in Africa. The large board game is suitable for ages 8 and up and takes about 45 minutes to play in a group. Copies can also be accessed from World Mission's Africa Office at 800-728-7228, ext. 5031 ([presbyterianmission.org/story/helping-africas-children-pns](http://presbyterianmission.org/story/helping-africas-children-pns)).

## Connect and Relate

- Learn from reading mission co-worker letters, inviting mission co-workers to present in your congregation, and following global poverty ministries ([pcusa.org/missionconnections](http://pcusa.org/missionconnections)).
- Be present with impacted communities in a way that is sensitive, caring, and responsive to local needs, through Presbyterian Disaster Assistance ([pcusa.org/pdavolunteersites](http://pcusa.org/pdavolunteersites)).
- As you seek to be a welcoming place for refugees and asylum seekers, do background reading and prepare yourselves with resources ([pcusa.org/pda/refugee](http://pcusa.org/pda/refugee)).
- Read stories of global communities and how they are addressing poverty in the Fall 2021 Mission Crossroads, "Matthew 25: Eradicating Systemic Poverty Together" ([pcusa.org/missioncrossroads](http://pcusa.org/missioncrossroads)).

## Share

- Centsability is a way local congregations or mid councils can collect funds for hunger ministry in their own area or through PC(USA) ([pcusa.org/centsability](http://pcusa.org/centsability)).
- Offer the congregation's time, skill sharing and building space with and for community groups.
- Learn about and participate in sharing resources as a form of reparation ([presbyterianmission.org/studyguidereparations](http://presbyterianmission.org/studyguidereparations)).