

*ACSWP Looks Ahead to 219th General Assembly (2010), Publishes Reports Approved by the 218th General Assembly (2008), Holds Meetings on the West and East Coasts, in the Southwest and the North, and Focuses on Interpretation and Communication Issues*

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**ACSWP Looks Ahead to the 219th General Assembly (2010): Four Study Groups Appointed to Draft Reports in Response to Policy Mandates Approved by the 218th General Assembly (2008)**

In response to four policy referrals approved by the 218th General Assembly (2008), ACSWP appointed the following work groups to study and develop reports that ACSWP will receive at its January 2010 meeting to determine their readiness for submission to the 219th General Assembly (2010).

*Gun Violence Study Team (GVST):* This group was appointed to develop “**a comprehensive study. . . [that] articulate a Reformed Theology of proactive, constructive nonviolence way of life and tactical method for bringing God's justice and peace to our communities and around the world; assess the social and economic costs of gun violence; explore how gun violence fits into a larger national culture of violence, and identify ways that the church can effectively address gun violence issues domestically and internationally, and to report these findings along with proposed action items**

**to the 219th General Assembly (2010)”**

(Item 09-05, *Minutes*, 2008, Part I, pp. 55, 860). The GVST held its first meeting in Philadelphia, PA, May 1-3, 2009.

*HIV/AIDS Work Group (HIV/AIDS WG):* This work group held its first meeting in Atlanta, GA, April 15-18, 2009. ACSWP appointed this team to develop “**a comprehensive study on HIV and AIDS for the PC(USA), recommending compassionate action and giving prophetic witness regarding issues related to people living with HIV and AIDS in the U.S.A. and around the world, and report to the 219th General Assembly (2010)**” (Item 10-02, *Minutes*, 2008, Part I, pp. 59, 1079) .

*Public Education Work Group (PEWG):* This team was appointed to “**study the church’s policies on public education in relationship to the issues of desegregation, affirmative action, faith-based initiatives, home schooling, charter schools, and the No Child Left Behind law, with attention to class as well as race; making appropriate recommendations that would be presented to the 219th General Assembly (2010), and, if appropriate, subsequently preparing a study guide for individual and congregational use**” (Item 09-06, *Minutes*, 2008, Part I, pp. 53, 55, 865). The PEWG held its first meeting in San Antonio, TX, June 15-17, 2009.

*Study Team to Update A Theology of Compensation:* The Theology of Compensation Study Team was appointed to “**update the PC(USA)’s 1983 “Theology of Compensation” report (*Minutes*, 1983, Part I, pp. 82, 116, 689–704) to provide theological guidance to church and**

**society with regard particularly to the impact of secular market assumptions on the compensation practices of the PC (USA)** (Item 09-08, *Minutes*, 2008, Part I, pp.54, 899). The study team held its first meeting in Louisville, KY, June 15-17, 2009.

### **ACSWP Self-Study Group**

In addition to the four studies cited above, a small subcommittee composed of elected members of ACSWP is developing a Self-Study Report about the Committee that will be presented to the 219th General Assembly (2010). This report is in response to a referral ACSWP received from the 216th General Assembly (2004) (Item 04-19, Add Standing Rule #.11. Regarding Independent Review Process for the Permanent Advocacy, and Advisory Committees and Commissions of the General Assembly, *Minutes*, 2004, Part I, pp. 88, 339-341). This report will focus, for the most part, on the ministries performed by the Committee over the last six years such as: recent papers developed by the Committee in response to General Assembly mandates, the Committee's Advice and Counsel work, and how ACSWP does its work of policy formation in collaboration with other entities of the church.

### **Committee Publishes Four General Assembly Policies Approved by the 218th General Assembly (GA) (2008), Two More to be Published in July 2009**

Last fall and in time for the November Presidential Election, ACSWP published *Lift Every Voice: Democracy, Voting Rights*

*and Electoral Reform*. This report continues the Presbyterian tradition of witness for democracy and the equality of electoral rights necessary for its exercise. *Lift Every Voice* contains both a Biblical and theological foundation and a set of recommendations for a more participatory and fair electoral process in the United States.

A complimentary PDF version of *Lift Every Voice* is available for downloading at <http://www.pcusa.org/acswp/pdf/votingrights.pdf>. In addition, hard copies of this resource can be purchased at \$3.00 each through the Presbyterians Distribution Services (PDS). Please specify PDS #02-052-08-003 when placing your orders.



In late January 2009, ACSWP published *God's Work in Women's Hands: Pay Equity and Just Compensation*. This carefully-researched report analyzes differences in education, skills, and experience, as well as gender and racial discrimination, to back its recommendations for implementing equal pay for comparable work. Recognizing that "the new reality in Christ should be reflected in the quality of the church's common life and witness," this resolution encourages all Presbyterians to uncover and correct unjustified pay disparities.

A complimentary PDF version of *God's Work in Women's Hands* is available for downloading at <http://www.pcusa.org/acswp/pdf/acswppayequity.pdf>. Hard copies of this policy can also be purchased at \$3.00 each through the Presbyterians Distribution Services (PDS). Please specify PDS #02-052-08-004.



This past spring, ACSWP published *The Power to Change: U.S. Energy Policy and Global Warming*. This report is the first major update of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s energy policy since the formation of this reunited denomination in 1983. *The Power to Change* offers moral guidance and provides practical steps individual Presbyterians, groups, and communities may take to change unhealthy energy practices to ensure that there is an abundant supply of God's good energy for future generations of the whole creation to enjoy

A complimentary PDF version of *The Power to Change* is available for downloading at [www.pcusa.org/acswp/pdf/energyreport.pdf](http://www.pcusa.org/acswp/pdf/energyreport.pdf). Hard copies of this report may be obtained at \$3.00 each through the Presbyterian Distribution Services (PDS). Please specify PDS #02-52-09-001.



In July 2009, ACSWP will publish two additional statements approved by the 218th General Assembly (2008). They are *From Homelessness to Hope: Constructing Just, Sustainable Communities for All God's People*, and *Comfort My People: A Policy Statement on Serious Mental Illness*.

*From Homeless to Hope* reaffirms the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s historical witness that universal access to safe, decent, accessible, affordable, and permanent housing is a measure and a sign of the coming Reign of God.

*Comfort My People* is the first major serious mental illness statement approved by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). It affirms that although faith can never explain or excuse the suffering in God's good and lovely creation, the church can proclaim that no aspect of serious mental illness can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The policy reports listed above are commended to the free Christian conscience of all congregations and the members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for prayerful study, dialogue and action.

**Holds Meetings on the West and East Coasts, in the Southwest and the North**

The Mission statement of the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP)<sup>1</sup> states:

*The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) as a servant of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) develops, interprets, and monitors policies that encourage and challenge the Church and society to reflect and act in faithful response to God's call to do justice.*

Fulfilling this mandate is an interactive process between the Committee, a diverse group of twelve members elected by the General Assembly, and lay and elected persons across the church. Over the course of the last eleven months, the Committee has met in Abiquiu, NM; Detroit, MI; Berkeley, CA; and Washington, DC, and in each place has explored how members of local congregations, presbyteries and community organizations in these regions are responding to social justice concerns identified by the General Assembly: gun violence, energy, HIV/AIDS, public education and globalization.<sup>2</sup>

By listening to experts from across the United States, ACSWP has tried to discern how it can perform its assigned policy formation work<sup>3</sup> in ways that will: (a) connect and communicate better with more constituency groups within both the church and society; and (b) use the gifts and talents of all Presbyterians more effectively. Through these fact-finding discussions, the Committee continually reaffirms the importance of the church's commitments to hear the voices of diversity, particularly

those of gender, race and class, as it performs its work.<sup>4</sup>

Some of the diverse voices the Committee has heard during this period include:

- pastors and elders
- an executive presbyter
- a presbytery moderator and vice moderator
- a juvenile detention chaplain
- an immigrant detention activist
- a professor of evangelism and mission
- a professor of social ethics
- a professor of African American Christianity
- a Latin American social and economic development worker
- a denominational legislative secretary for foreign policy
- health care workers
- gun violence experts
- a global development poverty staff person
- public education (K-12) experts
- a globalization specialist
- a former and current member of the General Assembly Council (GAC)

### **Interpretation and Communication Issues**

Like most of the entities of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) is aware that it must do more to interpret and communicate its work in a timely manner to the whole church. For almost a year now, ACSWP's Interpretation and Communication Committee (I&CC) has been meeting and brainstorming how ACSWP might act in faithful response to this communication challenge. Three suggestions that have generated the most interest among the Committee members are

the development of bulletin inserts that can be downloaded free of charge from

ACSWP's website; the development of short policy articles for publication through *The Thoughtful Christian*—a Presbyterian Publishing Corporation (PPC) publication; and making available through ACSWP's website other statements and resources developed and/or published by the Committee.

This year select resources developed and/or published by the Committee were displayed at the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators (APCE) annual event in San Antonio, TX on January 28-31, and the Big Tent event in Atlanta, GA on July 11-13. As stated above, resources developed by ACSWP will be on display in Booth 114 at the July 11-15 Presbyterian Women Churchwide Gathering in Louisville, KY. Copies of the 2006 globalization and 2008 energy statements developed by the Committee will be distributed in a workshop on "How Green is Your Church?" at the Alabama and Mississippi (AL/MS) Women's Gathering hosted by First Presbyterian Church in Starkville, MS on July 22-24.

Readers may also value the short summaries of General Assembly social witness policies located at The Presbyterian Leader@ <https://www.thepresbyterianleader.com/Beliefs.aspx> .

ACSWP continues to seek creative ways to reach the diverse populations within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and the larger society. The Committee encourages persons on this e-list to submit your feedback on previous reports developed by ACSWP and on emerging social witness justice concerns

you think this entity might want to pay close attention to. Comments, reflections and questions can be submitted online at <http://www.pcusa.org/acswp/feedback.htm> or mail to 100 Witherspoon Street, Room 3607, Louisville, KY 40202-1396.

***AN INVITATION***

**Individuals and groups attending the July 11-15 Presbyterian Women Churchwide Gathering in Louisville, KY are encouraged to stop by ACSWP's Booth 114 to preview and receive complimentary copies of recent and past General Assembly policies developed by the Committee.**

Endnotes

1. For more information about the ministries performed by the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP), please visit, <http://www.pcusa.org/acswp/> .
2. The 218th General Assembly (2008) directed the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) to develop reports on the following social justice topics: gun violence, HIV/AIDS, public education and a theology of compensation. These General Assembly referrals were discussed at the Committee's last three meetings. For more information about the fall 2008 ACSWP meeting in Detroit, Michigan (with comments about its summer 2008 meeting in Abiquiu, New Mexico), visit <http://www.pcusa.org/acswp/pdf/fall08detroit.pdf> .
3. The *Why and How the Church Makes a Social Policy Witness* statement adopted by the 205th General Assembly (1993) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) describes ACSWP's assigned policy function. Copies of this report can be

obtained from the Presbyterian Distribution Services (PDS) by calling 1-800-542-2612. Please specify PDS order #OGA-93-01<sup>15</sup> when placing your order.

4. Recent stories about ACSWP's work published by the Presbyterian News Service ([www.pcusa.org/pcnews](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews)) include:

**January 2009:**

*ACSWP seeks moral voice in economic reconstruction*

<http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09051.hm>

**February 2009:**

*Disarming teens' gun violence*

<http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09068.hm>

*Biographical information on ACSWP's HIV/AIDS work group released*

<http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09156.hm>

**June 2009:**

*PC(USA) energy policy playing well in Washington*

<http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09441.hm>

*Report card: Lack of resources, support for teachers will doom "No Child Left Behind," experts tell ACSWP*

<http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09469.hm>