

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)



ACSWP E-MEMO

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL WITNESS POLICY

FROM: Rev. Christian T. Iosso, Ph.D Ciosso@ctr.pcusa.org DATE: 5/22/07

Dear Friends:

We are increasing our e-memo mailing group. To that end, we are approaching past friends of the Advisory Committee as well as new friends who have more recently contacted us for policies, studies and resources. Our memos will not be frequent, but are intended to update persons interested in social witness policy several times per year. Last year, for example, we were helped by respondents who recommended persons to serve on study groups. We also welcome suggestions of topics or notice of developments to which reflective social justice practitioners should be apprised. We plan to communicate as well with past *Church & Society* magazine subscribers on new ways to communicate the ethics work and thinking of the church.

Here is a **summary of the Advisory Committee's work** prepared for the General Assembly Council on March 7, 2007. Also linked is the proposed **Social Creed for the 21st Century** and its two page backgrounder that has been received by the General Assembly of the National Council of Churches of Christ for study and discussion along with the 1908 "original" Social Creed (which was accepted by many communions and revised many times, most frequently by the United Methodists). If you walk through the door of the United Methodist Building in Washington, DC, where most of the mainline church offices are, you will see a version of the Social Creed on either side of the inner portal. This text is still open to revision and is being discussed among the member communions of the National Council.

In terms of events, we wish to draw your attention to the **[Ghost Ranch Week for Peace & Justice, July 28—August 4](#)**, at which ACSWP Coordinator Chris Iosso is scheduled to speak. The "headliners" of the gathering include Roberto Jordan, an Argentine church leader active in the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), and Larry Rasmussen, the Grawemeyer Award-winning ecological theologian and ethicist. A fuller description of the program follows, with a letter of invitation from Rick Ufford-Chase, himself one of the leaders of this influential seminar.

The subject matter of **Globalization** is wide, but a key emphasis in the Presbyterian and ecumenical documents of WARC and the World Council of Churches (the WCC's AGAPE document) is commitment to a sustainable economics that closes the great divide between rich and poor within and among nations. ACSWP is gathering

different perspectives on globalization to produce a study guide for the “Just Globalization” policy adopted at the last General Assembly. ACSWP will also have a role in promoting responses to the WARC and WCC statements, which are both strong cries from churches worldwide for an end to economic and military domination.

Clearly the **Iraq War** looms large in our hearts and on the world stage. The world may be, as Calvin said, the theatre of God’s glory, but we are having very tragic scenes in much of the Middle East. The Advisory Committee will be considering responses to the public debate, to calls from our ecumenical partners overseas, and to our own ethical analysis of responsibilities going forward. Many readers may know that the Assembly policy presented in 2004, terming the Iraq war “unwise, immoral and illegal,” was one of many church statements that saw this tragic misadventure for what it was, even if the full scope of callousness, corruption and incompetence could not be foreseen. Any statement by ACSWP will not simply present learnings from this war, but recommendations for its wisest conclusion.

We are at this time revising previous plans concerning the **annual Stony Point Consultation** on peacemaking, religion, violence and terrorism. This event was originally designed to work with policies of the General Assembly and to help the Advisory Committee develop responses to new events—such as the 9/11 tragedy. This consultation is usually scheduled to coincide loosely with the anniversary of that event in early September. **STAY TUNED FOR NEWS ON THAT!**

Despite the bad news of the war, and the continuing suffering in Darfur and Palestine/Israel, there is a dimension of the **Global Climate Change** story that brings hope. Despite extensive efforts to suppress and distort the truth of the science of global warming, this last year has seen a growing awareness that we face a global challenge that overshadows all others. This market externality—really a most spectacular market failure—abetted by parts of the US government—is now a bullet that cannot be dodged. Again the Church’s support for the Kyoto protocol (three times) and other basic preventive measures helps us see the bravery of whistle-blowing scientists like James Hansen in starker perspective against “hard path” energy interests in control of national policy. It is indeed unfortunate that the US auto industry believed in the energy industry’s denial that green technologies were needed; combined with oil price rises caused in part by our “state of denial” in Iraq, our companies did not make the energy efficient vehicles now growing in popularity among a wiser populace.

We salute the Presbyterians for Restoring Creation (PRC) for their steadfastness on environmental stewardship. ACSWP will be bringing a far-sighted energy policy to the General Assembly, building on the **paper on carbon neutrality** posted on our website. There we note newsletter email sites of other parts of the social justice family

in the PCUSA, and encourage you to check them out as well. Blessings, grace & peace,
Chris Iosso for ACSWP