

## Summary

### Prospectus for a New Task Force of the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy on



### Comprehensive Serious Mental Illness

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) invites comments on the following prospectus and nominations of people to serve on a new task force charged with developing new social witness policy for the church.

The purpose of the proposed Task Force on "Comprehensive Serious Mental Illness" is to explore serious mental illness and to develop a comprehensive serious mental illness policy with principles and recommendations to assist the church in its ministry and advocacy in society. The Task Force on "Comprehensive Serious Mental Illness" will need to examine the many dimensions related to serious mental illness as they impact the church and society. It will also make recommendations for the whole church in this important area of ministry. Among the topics this social witness policy will address include justice issues and full participation in the life of the church and society.

People living with a Serious Mental Illness (SMI) comprise a group often oppressed in American society: they are often denied access to jobs and housing; they often have limited access to quality treatment; and they bear the burden of having a stigmatized illness. Sadly, they have also been left out full participation in the life of the church. Many have left the church because of the insensitivity of congregations and pastors. When are members of a church, they face such problems as lack of access to decision-making bodies, pastors and church caregivers who don't know how to give care, and the fear that revealing their pain will separate rather than bind them to fellow congregants. Others with SMI who receive good medical treatment and are fully functioning at home, work, and church, never disclose their illness, and never feel fully known, and therefore not fully accepted, by their church. The proposed Task Force on "Comprehensive Serious Mental Illness" will study and offer a vision for ministry in church and society with people living with a serious mental illness.

The full prospectus and information regarding the nomination of members for the proposed task force, including a Nomination Form, is available on ACSWP's web site, <http://www.pcusa.org/acswp/wwd/wwd-seriousmentalillness.htm>, on the page "What we're doing" at "Serious Mental Illness."

It is also available at your local Presbytery Office or by contacting Belinda Curry, Associate for Policy Development and Interpretation, Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy, 100 Witherspoon Street, Room 3611, Louisville, KY 40202-1396; Phone: 1-800-728-7228, ext. 5813; Fax: 502-569-8041; Email: [bcurry@ctr.pcusa.org](mailto:bcurry@ctr.pcusa.org). Feedback and comments on the prospectus and nominations may also be sent to that address.

Nominations are due by January 15, 2004