



# How to Use *Horizons* Magazine

by Joyce MacKichan Walker

Since the theme of this issue is faith and politics, the ideas provided here are intended to suggest ways to use the articles to empower action, enrich understanding, encourage involvement or confront injustice. These can be used by individuals for personal reflection and response, or they can guide use of these articles in small groups.

## EMPOWER

### “Only Five More to Go” by Chanequa Walker-Barnes

- Believing impossible things has propelled many an activist, many a Christian, many a woman, many an “ordinary person” to do extraordinary things for one another and for God’s world. Think of someone you know who fits this description. What impossible things do you long to believe? What difference might it make if you believed one (or all!) of them? How might you act if you did? Consider the path of acting as if you believed—sometimes that path empowers belief.
- Ask others what impossible things they have believed. The stories of others empower our belief and our action.

### “Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans” by Catherine Koppel

- After reading *Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans*, invite your circle or PW group to take on an issue from the grassroots. Think about what problems face your community, and the talents and skills your group has to combat the problem. Provide a process from one of the books Catherine recommends, *Building Powerful Community Organizations: A Personal Guide to Creating Groups That Can Solve Problems and Change the World* (Arlington, Mass.: Long Haul Press, 2007) or use a process that a member of your congregation can provide. We can be the change we envision!

### “Politics in 2008: A Technological Election” by Ann Ferguson

- Sometimes Presbyterian Women’s groups in local churches struggle with their relevance to younger women, and their ability to engage the participation of younger women in program, mission and advocacy. This year’s election has captured the imaginations of younger Americans more than former elections, thus creating an opportunity to open new conversations and new entrees into political and social issue conversation and engagement.

Talk with others in your circle or group about the opportunities this issue of *Horizons* magazine might provide to have meaningful conversation. Order some extra copies of the magazine from Presbyterian Distribution Service, 800/524-2612, and give them to some younger women you identify, inviting them to gather for a conversation about the place of the church in the political arena.

Remember to honor a diversity of opinions on the candidates and the issues, but don't be afraid to bring the words of Jesus and a reminder of one of the "Great Ends of the Church" (G-1.0200), "the promotion of social righteousness," to the conversation. And if you are a younger woman technologically engaged in this year's election process, how about using this issue as a stimulus for those not as "connected" to explore what the internet has to offer the newspaper generation—you know how!

### **"What Does the Church Say?" by Teresa Chávez Saucedá**

- Many in our churches know very little about Presbyterian polity and how individuals and local churches impact governance. This topic might be worthy of a summer adult education class on Presbyterian process and how it works, or a follow-up to the 2008 General Assembly (GA) in San José. Invite your clerk of session to help participants understand how this works. Find out who your presbytery's commissioners to General Assembly are and invite one to describe his or her experiences and report on the response of the General Assembly to the resolutions mentioned in Teresa's article.
- Explore the listing of policy papers and accompanying study guides available from the Office of the General Assembly—they are available on [www.pcusa.org/oga/publications.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/oga/publications.htm). Ask someone which your church has used. Select one you think will be of particular interest to Presbyterian Women and ask those responsible for adult education in your church to offer a study on it.
- From the resolutions going to GA that are described in "What Does the Church Say?", select one to highlight in your opening fall PW gathering. Invite women to follow it as a group and proactively respond if it comes to presbyteries for a vote. Encourage ownership of the direction of the PC(USA) in public policy.



## **ENRICH**

### **"Talk to Me: Speaking Faith to Christian Voters" by Melissa Florer-Bixler**

- Use this article to examine your own views on the intersection of faith and politics, considering these questions:
  - Would I have recognized the two biblical allusions Huckabee used?
  - What does that say about me?
  - What do I think about the use of subtle biblical allusions in political speeches?
  - Do I think political candidates should be "...asked to share their faith stories and relay how their personal religious values are reflected in their platforms"?
  - Why does that matter to me?
  - What role do I want religious affiliation/the expression of personal faith/one's own church or community of faith to play in my evaluation of the candidates? in the country's judgment of the candidates?
  - How have I developed my ideas about religion and politics?
  - "...[T]he true test of this election will be the ways in which the church demands its presidential candidates speak to the flourishing of every human life." What demands articulate for you what would make every human life flourish?
  - What are your responses to the questions Florer-Bixler asks in the last paragraph of her article?



## ENCOURAGE

### “The Politics of Mission” by Amy Stapleton

You might use these questions to guide a discussion of this article around your kitchen table, or in a coffee shop. Invite a few friends with whom you want to have this conversation, or offer a copy of the magazine article and these questions to your mission committee, session or pastor.

- Read the introduction. Stapleton claims, “If we do not speak out about *all* injustices—even those that do not impact us in our particular social location—we are effectively harming the body of Christ.” List injustices your church does address. Now list some it does not. Ask yourselves, “How is it possible to address *all* injustices? How might we identify and hold up the ministries of individuals speaking out in their places of vocation? How does a church choose the injustices that will receive significant and ongoing focus? What strategies might help us when we feel overwhelmed by the needs?”
- Read the paragraphs under the header “Looking Back, Looking In.” What is your church’s legacy? Tell stories of some individual member legacies you know of. How might all these stories inspire mission? Stapleton says, “When we worry more about how God is acting in our own lives than how God is acting in the world to overcome the injustices of war, poverty, hunger and the AIDS epidemic we are missing the fullness of God’s saving grace.”

In what ways does this statement convict us individually? As a church community? In what ways might it inspire us to focus our energies differently? Read aloud the quote from Archbishop Desmond Tutu in paragraph three of this section. What feelings and thoughts does this quote bring up in us? Naming past injustices helps us focus on new ways of telling others the story, and being the story with and for others. What are some things we learn from past experiences?

After reading “Transforming Relationships,” describe Stapleton’s new model. What is the difference between justice and charity?

- Read the paragraphs under the header “Solidarity and Advocacy.” Stapleton calls us to, “...examine our history and look for more life-giving models of engagement in the here and now,” and to “...actively *be* hope...because we believe that God is at work in the world.” Discuss some new issues where advocacy is needed, select one or two you can address and ways you might begin.



## CONFRONT

### “Only Five More to Go” by Chanequa Walker-Barnes

- Consider the two opposing positions described—race-is-nothing and race-is-everything. State each of these positions in your own words. In what ways does your personal position align with either of these positions? Examine the “scars” Walker-Barnes names in the last section. What scars are you able to acknowledge and own? How might you “unearth [y]our scars and allow them to be touched by one another”? What impossible thing are you willing, and therefore able by the grace of Jesus Christ, to do about your own racism? About the racism of the church? Your community?

- Research has shown the most segregated hour in a week is 11:00 A.M. on Sunday morning. What steps might the church take to address this on any given Sunday? On particular Sundays, what intentional “something” might raise the issue in a constructive way?

**“Celebrating 100 Years of Social Awareness” by Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty**

- After reading this article, print out a copy of the Social Creed. Pick a group you believe might be responsive to the suggestion to use it to stimulate conversation and action. Use Hinson-Hasty’s list of “Ways to Use the Creed” as a beginning.
- Bring this to the attention of the committee in your church responsible for planning adult education opportunities. Suggest they feature it as a way to invite response in your congregation.

**“A New Day and a New World” By Joseph C. Hough Jr.**

- The fact that the General Assembly meeting and a national election fall in the same year offers an opportunity to directly examine the connection between religion and politics. This article explores Jesus’ call to this arena and lays out a “state of the union address” on poverty. What shocks you in what you read here? How does your personal situation either illustrate or compare with what is described here? How would you describe the landscape of your congregation in relation to this description of Americans? and your community?
- “Poverty kills hope and opportunity” (p. 5). Why is this true?
- “Christians need to remember that the biblical accounts of Jesus’ ministry give clear directions for making political choices that are responsive to the needs of the poor” (p. 5). What are some of those “clear directions”? What additional directions do you find in the Old Testament? In the letters?
- When you examine the call of Jesus for a new world, what does it look like to you? Consider the distinction Hough draws between charity and bringing in the kingdom of justice for the poor?
- Which of the candidates seeking election this fall offer positions and policies that you believe will best serve the poor? How will you examine and evaluate their positions in light of Jesus’ call to a kingdom of justice?