

Justice Peace Links

Justice and Peace Committee – Churchwide Coordinating Team – Presbyterian Women

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Presbyterian Washington Office



On Being An Advocate

By Margaret Welsh

Background

Becoming an advocate is an important part of working for justice and peace. Our faith helps to give us power so that justice is done for all people. Here are a few situations in which peacemakers need to make their voices heard:

- An immigration raid took place at a Swift meatpacking plant where 90 women and men were detained, pending deportation to Mexico. There was no chance to prepare for the humanitarian consequences of the raid. The arrested men and women had no access to legal counsel and the children were left without parents (or parent).
- Women often are sent out on their own from domestic violence shelters without the skills and know-how to cope on their own. They tend to go back to their former partners only to meet with violence again.
- There aren't enough beds at the homeless shelter to accommodate everyone who comes for a meal and a night's rest. Many are left to wander the streets after receiving a meal.

What Can Presbyterian Women Do?

- Get started. Getting started is the most important part of becoming an advocate on any issue. Build good relationships with legislators and advocates. Develop a clear policy agenda and goals.
- Sign a petition or give financial support to an advocacy organization such as Bread for the World or the Children's Defense Fund.
- Learn to communicate effectively. Know with whom you are communicating, what they do and know where to find them.

- Contact your senators and congresspersons. They help their constituents as individuals and groups to solve problems with the federal government. They have staff and money to use as they see fit, in order to serve the people they represent.
 - a. Write an effective letter or email to your public official. Give your credentials. You are a voter and maybe a parent, student, homemaker, minister, teacher, physician or engineer. State clearly what you are writing about, why you are writing and what position you would like the public official to take. Ask them to respond, then thank them for their work.
 - b. Visit their offices. A visit can be as effective as a letter. But don't overstay your welcome. For other tips, see the resource "How To Be an Effective Advocate . . . Making our voices heard!" available at www.pcusa.org/washington/howtoadvocate.pdf.
 - c. Call their offices. A phone call has impact. Ask others to call as well. Tallies are kept on the number of phone calls made to officials and on which issues.
 - d. Make use of the Washington office of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). It is located on Capitol Hill, right across from the Capitol building. See www.pcusa.org/washington.

Margaret Welsh is a member of the Justice and Peace Committee of the Churchwide Coordinating Team of Presbyterian Women.

Biblical/Theological Dimensions

The story of the good samaritan in *Luke 10:30–35*

"In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action is dead" (*James 2:17, NIV*).

ADVOCACY is the act of pleading or arguing in favor of something, such as a cause, idea or policy; it is active support.

Resources

1. *The Good Samaritan, Presbyterians and Public Policy* by Dick Watts (Louisville, Ky.: Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 1989); PDS #259-89-907
2. *How Should Christians Be Involved in the Public Arena?* by Elaine Saum (New York: Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 1988); out of print
3. *Making a Difference in the Public Arena* by Jim Watkins (Louisville, Ky.: Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 1993); PDS #259-94-958
4. *Rebuilding: Peacemaking in Nehemiah* by Jim Watkins (Louisville, Ky.: Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 1996); PDS #70-350-96-287
5. *Remember to Double Knot Your Shoelace: A Guide for Running Grassroots Campaigns* by Jim Watkins (Louisville, Ky.: Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 1997); PDS #70-270-97-019

* Items with a PDS number may be ordered by contacting Presbyterian Distribution Service (PDS) at 800/524-2612.

Additional Resource

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Washington Office
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