



Presbyterian Peace Fellowship

presbypeacefellowship.org/ga223

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Briefing Paper for GA Committee

9

Peacemaking

Dear Committee 9,

Greetings from the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship as you prepare to serve at the 223rd General Assembly. Peacemaking is central to our faith. You are on a great committee! We write to lift up items before Committee 9 and to share a concern about one GA plenary action.

We strongly support the *Overture on Support of Peace Churches (09-03)*. The 222nd GA concluded a six-year denominational Peace Discernment Process with the adoption of "Five Affirmations for Peacemaking." Several congregations responded with local study of the affirmations, and have committed to be "peace churches." The overture commends them as an example and asks the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program to provide online resources to coordinate continuing work with the Five Affirmations throughout the denomination.

The Presbyterian Peace Fellowship does not support *A Resolution on Global Order and National Purpose (09-06)*, which recommends funding a study to develop principles for U.S. leadership in world affairs, including military policy. The resolution contains a long list of very selective "affirmations," largely from the Christian Realist (or "just war") school of thought. As rationale for the recommendations, these would be fine. But they should not be adopted as new PC(USA) affirmations since they were developed without a participatory process and are missing many nonviolent and global perspectives.

The proposed study team in (09-06) would include academic "experts" and people with military backgrounds, while excluding such essential voices as global church partners, victims of environmental racism or military occupation, nonviolent peacemaking activists, young adults, and others who are often excluded from church policy development. And this resolution has financial implications, money that could be more effectively spent on mission projects that enable real peacemaking work at all levels of the church.

For example, an overture addressing violence in **Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador (09-04)** would establish a new mission co-worker position in Central America, hire a grassroots network organizer in the United States, and provide training for **(cont. over)**

Celebrating 74 Years!

Who we are: Founded in 1944, the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship is a nation-wide community of Presbyterians who act on the example of Jesus to reduce war, violence and exploitation. We are a non-partisan group, open to all Presbyterians. Except for a small staff, we are volunteers who pay our own way to GA. We do not work for or represent any government or outside lobby group. Because of our focus on peacemaking, we have divested our Peace Fellowship Endowment Fund at the Presbyterian Foundation of all fossil fuel companies and over 20 companies that profit from or enable the Occupation of Palestine by Israel.

Be Bold! Nonviolence Works.

Please see presbypeacefellowship.org/ga223 for information on all peacemaking issues coming to the 223rd GA. If you have questions or suggestions at GA, you can always text us. Text GApeace to 33222.

In the GA Exhibit area, visit us at **Booth 119-121** for conversation & for education/action resources.

Join Us for the Peace Breakfast!

Wed. June 20, 7am, Tickets at ga-pcusa.org

Progressive Presbyterians GA Issues Briefing Breakfast, Sat. June 16, 7-9 am

at Centenary Methodist Church. No ticket is required, but please register at presbypeacefellowship.org/ga223
Option: Following this briefing, join the last leg of the 260 mile PCUSA Walk for a Fossil Free World, from the Centenary Methodist Church to the General Assembly.

PCUSA Walk for a Fossil Free World

June 1- 16, We are walking from the PC(USA) offices in Louisville to the GA in St. Louis. Step-by-step, the walkers join 40 presbyteries that have called for action at the 223rd General Assembly to protect creation by divesting from fossil fuel stocks. **See pcusawalk.org**

To join The Walk for the final day, including the entry into St. Louis, contact info@presbypeacefellowship.org
Closing Worship –Join in The Walk's closing worship service on Fri. June 15 at 7pm at Centenary Methodist Church, 55 Plaza Square, St. Louis.

You can also view live-streamed teach-ins and worship from The Walk each night June 1- 15 at **#walk2divest** or pcusawalk.org

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local leaders in both Central America and the U.S. It calls for creating mechanisms to hear the voices of church leaders from Meso-America when policy decisions are made that affect their context, and supports a strategic and coordinated faith-rooted advocacy movement for comprehensive immigration reform in the United States. **We support directing financial resources to urgently needed nonviolent peacemaking in Central America, along the U.S. border, and in the struggles of refugees facing unjust detention or deportation.**

Your committee will also consider thoughtful and comprehensive items on **Nuclear Disarmament (09-08), South Sudan (09-02), Yemen (09-05), and Madagascar (09-07)**, all deserving of support.

An extremely timely overture on the **Korean Peninsula (09-09)** could become a vehicle for additional statements on this quickly changing time of hope and opportunity for peace and reconciliation. If needed, there are people available to help with amendments such as the overture advocate, Ecumenical Advisory Delegate, Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP), and committee resource persons.

Thank you for serving at GA. We wish you faith, energy and a wonderful experience in St. Louis! If there is anything that the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship can do to be of help, please call on us.

Sincerely,

Emily Brewer, PPF Executive Director
ga@presbypeacefellowship.org

Please see the next page for GA Plenary Information.

Through GA Committee 14, all commissioners will consider a proposal to adopt Martin Luther King's 1963 "Letter from Birmingham City Jail" as a Contemporary Statement of Faith. Here is one selection:

I had also hoped that the white moderate would reject the myth concerning time in relation to the struggle for freedom.... the strangely irrational notion that there is something in the very flow of time that will inevitably cure all ills....

Human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability; it comes through the tireless efforts of [people] willing to be co-workers with God, and without this hard work, time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation. We must use time creatively, in the knowledge that the time is always ripe to do right.

**---Martin Luther King. Jr.
"Letter from Birmingham City Jail"**

The Presbyterian Peace Fellowship Reflects on One GA Plenary Issue: Climate Change

Addressing climate change requires an unprecedented mobilization of human genius, unity, timeliness and love. We support many of the climate-related proposals before GA, including steps to reduce carbon use by individuals, churches and institutions, as well as support for alternative energy loans, employment and investment. Along with 40 presbyteries, we call upon GA to support Overture 08-01, "Overture on Directing the Board of Pensions and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Foundation to Divest from Fossil Fuels and Actively Invest in Securities that Focus on Renewable Energy."

Top Five Reasons to Divest from Fossil Fuels Now

1. Because we believe in God, Creator of heaven and earth. From the beginning (Genesis 1:28/Genesis 2:15), God calls humanity as stewards of creation, in order to keep the earth a home for all living things. Jesus calls for repentance; when we have gone in a wrong direction, Christ helps us **turn around**. He gives us the courage to act now as the stewards God made us to be.

2. Because war and violence will be fueled by climate disasters. Climate change will make food, safe water and habitable land scarcer and costlier, indirectly leading to perpetual violence and war. According to the research of Marshall Burke and Solomon Hsiang, for each half-degree increase in temperature, we can expect a ten to twenty percent increase in armed conflict.¹ With an increase of five degrees, we could see world violence double by the end of this century. The U.S. Department of Defense describes climate change as a "threat multiplier" of poverty, disease, mass displacement, migration and political instability.² Climate-caused resource scarcity has already been deadly for the people in Syria, Somalia and other places. In "National Security and the Accelerating Risks of Climate Change," the CNA Advisory Board (retired high-level U.S. military officers) writes: "The extent to which military forces will be used to protect the homeland in response to projected climate change impacts should not be limited by our past history of military deployments or limited by failures of imagination."³ As peacemakers, we need to act now.

3. Because time is up to mitigate climate change. Climate change is coming faster than first predicted. From words now removed from its website under the current EPA administrator, the EPA stated in 2015: "Global temperatures are projected to increase

worldwide by 2° F to 11.5°F by 2100."⁴ What does this mean? In a stunning article worth reading by every Presbyterian, David Wallace-Wells organized the scientific literature on what could happen with this increase in heat. His findings go far beyond rising sea levels: "Absent a significant adjustment to how billions of humans conduct their lives, parts of the Earth will likely become close to uninhabitable, and other parts horrifically inhospitable, as soon as the end of this century."⁵ There are no "do-overs" with climate change. The fossil fuel industry has known of these dangers since the 1970s and has expended millions of dollars to confuse and deny them. We simply do not have more time to talk with the fossil fuel industry; they must change now.

4. Because divestment makes the faithful impact.

Divestment, not more corporate engagement, will wake up the oil and gas industry from "business as usual." There are many ways we can fight climate change, but divestment is the most direct action the Presbyterian Church as a whole can take. Divestment aligns all our investments with PCUSA policy against investing in ways that harm people. We are powerful when we join over 800 other faith, academic, and philanthropic institutions, with assets of \$6 trillion, to divest from fossil fuels. We have the support of 40 presbyteries that have voted in favor of this.

5. Because we need to be at the right table.

The MRTI report calls us to stay at the table of the oil and gas industry. Is that the right table for us? No. We are called to the table of people who are marginalized, to the table of our siblings in frontline communities who already suffer because of fossil fuels. Proponents of shareholder engagement tell us that divestment means we will shame the industry. Yes, we probably will. But until we divest, we betray Christ's call to care for people who are marginalized and God's call to be stewards. Fossil Fuel divestment is now central to living out our faith. All the good actions and writings of our denomination to respond to climate change are for nothing if we continue to fund the industry that is harming creation.

1 Burke, Solomon and Carleton, "Conflict in a Changing Climate," The European Physical Journal, Spring 2016. www.stanford.edu/~mburke/papers/Carleton_Hsiang_Burke2016.pdf

2 U.S. Dept of Defense, "2014 Climate Change Roadmap." www.acq.osd.mil/EIE/Downloads/CCARprint_wForward_e.pdf

3 www.cna.org/cna_files/pdf/MAB_5-8-14.pdf

4 www.epa.gov/climatechange/science/overview (No longer available on-line)

5 David Wallace-Wells, "The Uninhabitable Earth," www.nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2017/07/climate-change-earth-too-hot-for-humans-annotated.html