

# Broken Bread

Newsletter of Social Ministries for Peace & Justice, Des Moines Presbytery  
Volume 29 · Number 1

## In this issue:

### ADVOCACY

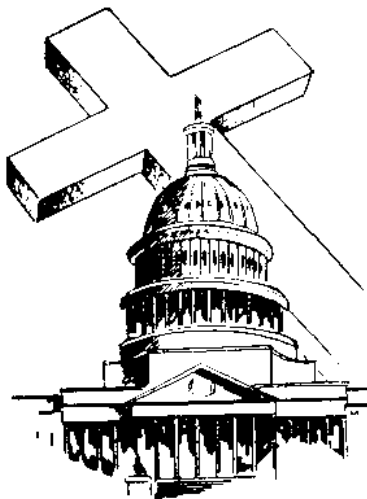
The Social Ministries Task Force sets goals each year related to the duties of the task force listed in the Presbytery's *Manual of Operations*. This year's goals include:

- Support partners engaged in environmental justice; local ecumenical peacemaking; jus-tice reform, and promotion of inclusion.
- Support an overture advocate to General Assembly.
- Offer Elder Index educational workshops.
- Organize mission seminar to the Holy Land.
- Recruit congregations to the Cents-Ability program for hunger action.
- Support WeLIFT job assistance ministries.
- Promote opportunities for assistance for transitional housing for ex-offenders.
- Prepare a social ministries handbook for congregations.
- Create a legislative advocacy network within the Presbytery.
- Offer information sessions at Meetings of Presbytery on issues and actions.
- Contribute to grant fund for first-

EDITOR: HAE Nancy Lister-Settle  
PRESBYTERY OF DES MOINES  
2400 – 86<sup>th</sup> Street, Ste. 20  
Urbandale, IA 50322-4306  
[www.dmpresbytery.org](http://www.dmpresbytery.org)

time visitors to El Salvador mission.

*Broken Bread* will focus on some of these goals over the course of the year. This issue's theme is **ADVOCACY**.



## WHAT CHRISTIANITY IS NOT

*From the Washington Office, PC(USA) biblical and theological perspectives series, by Dr. John M. Buchanan*

*“Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple...He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.”*

John 2:15 (NRSV)

I was struck by something Canadian theologian Douglas John Hall said recently. Hall said that when he is introduced or in any way identified publicly as a Christian theologian these days, he immediately has to explain what he is not. I know what he means. The Christianity that most makes the news these days makes me cringe. It is not what I mean either.

And so, a sermon on what religion is not. Sister Joan Chittister, a Benedictine nun, addresses the subject at the beginning of her fine book *Called to Question*. She reflects on how religion – hers or anybody's – seems to restrict and confine the human spirit. She writes:

*I believe so much in the breadth of the soul that every day I respect less and less those things in religion...that bind it. We tie the soul down...We snuff it mid-flight. It is God that religion must be about, not itself. When religion makes itself God,*

*it ceases to be religion...God save us from the smallness we practice in the name of religion.*

That's quite a statement. For nearly five centuries, Catholics and Protestants have been squaring off and defining themselves by what they are not. It used to be a serious infraction for a Catholic to walk through the doors of a Protestant church or for a Protestant to enter a Catholic church. At times we went to war with one another. At times we seemed to say that the other side was not even legitimately Christian. At times we seemed to believe that there will be only Catholics – or Protestants – in heaven. Our religion separated us.

I thought about all that and about how stunned my own family members would be as I drove over to Old St. Pat's one day last winter in the middle of a snowstorm to preach the sermon at 5:00 Mass. That was a first for me. It was a very moving experience. Father Jack Wall and Father Tom Hurley are good friends. Their approach to ministry and mission are similar to our own at Fourth Presbyterian. The church was full; the service was lively.

I kept thinking about my Grandmother McCormick,

a product of that older age and mentality, who was convinced that the Catholic Church wanted to take over the world and start persecuting Protestants; and I imagined her wringing her hands in heaven, her Presbyterian grandson preaching in a Mass, lamenting that Rome had finally got me. It was a good experience, a symbol, I thought, of the way Christianity ultimately judges and overcomes its own religious expressions and institutions. For an hour, we were not Catholics or Protestants, but Christians trying to follow and be faithful to Jesus, our common Lord.

A few days later, I received a wonderful email from a young woman, Carla Nuzzo, who was in attendance at the Mass with her two sons, ages twelve and nine. She said nice things about my sermon. She explained that Mass is still an exercise in trying to sit still for her sons but that occasionally a word or two seeps in. She wrote:

*In the car after Mass my older son asked why a non-Catholic would speak at Old St. Pat's. I went into some "PC speak" about how Lent unites all Christians, about how religious differences of any kind have always caused a heap of trouble, about how Old St. Pat's is*

*about inclusion and so on... when from the back seat the nine-year-old said, "Who cares? So he's not Catholic. Why are we even talking about it?"*

*I was momentarily humbled by this. He seemed so blind to differences that even bringing them up seemed offensive. I would have taken great pride and credit for raising such a naturally inclusive child if he hadn't added, "Too bad he's a Cubs fan. That's just dumb."*

Father Hurley had mentioned my baseball commitments in his introduction, and I had forgotten, frankly, that Old St. Pat's is on the South Side, barely. He said my religious affiliation wasn't a problem; it was my baseball preferences.

Sometimes someone has to stand up and say, or demonstrate, what religion is not.

The text for the third Sunday in Lent is the story of Jesus cleansing the temple. It is a strong story, not an easy story. It is a story about what religion is not.

There is in the Bible a kind of running argument between God and religion. God creates. God gives life. God calls a people and delivers them from slavery. God provides for them. God gives them a

home, and what God expects for all this undeserved goodness, this great love, is gratitude and life lived on the basis of that same love. God's people are to love God with all their heart and mind and strength, and they are to do that by loving their neighbor. It's that simple – or ought to be.

Religion enters the picture as the way people organize themselves to thank God and to live in faithful love. Rituals are designed to help them express their gratitude. Rules and laws are devised to make sure they're getting it right. And then a shift happens. The rituals and rules designed to help them express their gratitude and love slowly become the point of the exercise. Gratitude and love fade as keeping the rituals and obeying the rules ascends.

And so there is this wonderful running argument between God and the people, particularly the religious people. God keeps saying, "No, you're missing the point." In the Bible, God speaks through individuals called prophets who stand up and say things like "I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings." That's Hosea.

Amos puts it bluntly:

*I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. But let justice roll down like water and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.*

Micah says:

*With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?*

*How about thousands of rams? Ten thousand rivers of oil? I'll do whatever it takes. I'll be utterly and passionately and fanatically religious if that's what you want.*

Micah writes:

*He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God.*

And so Jesus, one day, out of that prophetic tradition in his own religious heritage, visits the Jerusalem temple, the heart of his religion, the very institutional, physical embodiment of his faith.

What he saw that day must have been jarring. In the first courtyard, open to all, called the Court of the Gentiles, there were booths where every adult male had to pay the annual temple tax. But before he got that far he

had to change his Roman coins for Hebrew money because the Roman coin bore the image of the emperor. So there was a currency exchange.

In the next court there were inspection tables where the visitor presented his sacrificial lamb or doves to ensure that they were without blemish. Beside those tables, there was a menagerie of sorts: pre-inspected lambs, oxen, calves, pigeons, for sale.

Fleming Rutledge describes it with tongue in cheek:

*It's Passover week, and it's a mob scene. The temple is a tourist attraction, religion at its apex. Here are all the religious instincts of humanity on display.*

*There's liturgical dance in the sanctuary, performance art in the courtyard, and a rock mass in the nave. You can buy a tour guide in the narthex, a cookbook in the transept, and a bumper sticker in the parish hall. Weight Watchers meets in the Sunday School wing, yoga in the gym, AA in the audiovisual room. There's a prayer group in the basement, a flower show in the courtyard and a group therapy in the reception room. And you can get your money*

changed at five convenient ATM locations.

*What a temple! What a church! God must be very pleased. (The Undoing of Death, p. 53)*

Sometimes someone has to stand up and say what religion is not. So Jesus does it. Fashions a whip. Upsets the currency exchange table, sends the coins flying everywhere, knocks down the inspection booths, opens the gates to the sacrificial animal pens, and physically ejects everybody. Can you imagine that? I'll bet his disciples told that story over and over again and laughed. "Remember the time he walked right into the temple and overturned the tables? Remember the noise, the looks on their faces?"

Sometimes someone has to stand up and say what religion is not. In our day, Jim Wallis has done it eloquently in a best seller, *God's Politics: Why the Right Gets it Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It*.

Wallis is an Evangelical pastor, editor of *Sojourners* magazine, who has the courage to identify what he calls the "hijacking" of Christianity by the religious and political right. It is a potent collaboration, in the news every day. "Many people around the world," he writes, "now think that

Christian faith stands for political commitments that are almost the opposite of its true meaning."

Wallis overturns a few tables. He says:

*God is not partisan. God is not a Republican or a Democrat. When either party tries to politicize God, or co-opt religious communities for their political agendas, they make a terrible mistake.*

Author Dan Wakefield picked up Wallis's phrase for a new book of his own, *The Hijacking of Jesus*, in which he has researched the way the religious right has successfully claimed for itself the mantle of Christian faith and happily joined hands with the political right in support of a political and social agenda it simply announces as the "Christian agenda." To express a different opinion on reproductive rights for instance, to come to a different conclusion on global warming and the environment, or stem cell research, or Social Security, is to be accused of opposing Christian faith and values.

Rabbi Michael Lerner, editor of *Tikkun* magazine, in his book, *The Left Hand of God*, says:

*...the unholy alliance of the Political Right and the Religious Right threatens to destroy the America we love. It also threatens to*

*generate a popular revulsion against God and religion by identifying with militarism, ecological irresponsibility, fundamentalist antagonism toward science, and insensitivity to the needs of the poor and powerless.*

Lerner quotes George Grant, executive director of Coral Ridge Ministries, one of the huge right-wing operations:

*Christians have an objective, a holy responsibility to reclaim the land for Jesus Christ, to have dominion in civil structures just as in every other aspect of life and godliness. But it is dominion we are after, not just a voice. It is dominion we are after, not just influence. Not equal time, dominion...world conquest ...Christian politics has as its primary intent the conquest of the land.*

On the other side of it, who will ever forget the pathetic moment during the presidential campaign when candidate Howard Dean woke up to what was happening and tried to get on the religion bandwagon? He told a reporter that he was an Episcopalian but added that he doesn't go to church much but helped his parish with some real estate negotiations regarding a bike path. The reporter asked him what his favorite New Testa-

ment book was and Dean announced the book of Job, Old Testament.

The challenge here is for the Church to remember what it is about. It is not about a partisan political agenda. It is about issues that were central to its Lord's teaching. It is not about dominion or conquest. It is about justice and compassion and kindness. It is not about taking over anything. It is about walking humbly and making sure the poor are cared for, the excluded included, the children nurtured.

The challenge is for the Church to remember that it is not about itself. It is not about religion. It is about Jesus Christ.

And there is personal challenge here. This story makes me uncomfortable precisely because Jesus seems so unmanageable, so unreasonable, so unpredictable.

The scene in the temple when he upsets the tables and drives out the money changers was made for Rembrandt, and Rembrandt painted it. It is an incredibly strong painting, full of chaos and turbulence.

It is very crowded: a table is hitting the floor, dogs are barking, people are thrown down off their seats and are running

away. In the upper right corner, the religious leaders are observing in splendid isolation, clearly deciding that this is too much; this man is too much. He must go. And in the center, a striking, strong Christ swinging the whip – not slender, frail, retiring, pious, but bulky, muscular, compelling.

It makes me uncomfortable because it is a reminder that Jesus Christ is not passive, is not content to be retiring, waiting patiently for you and me to get around to paying attention. It is a reminder that sometimes he barges into my life and yours and forces a decision. It is a reminder, on the third Sunday of Lent, that he was crucified not for teaching about love and forgiveness but because he challenged people, challenged religious and political leaders, because one day he overturned tables in the temple to show them what religion is not.

I have kept for years something Dorothy Sayers wrote a generation ago:

*The people who hanged Christ never accused him of being a bore – on the contrary; they thought him too dynamic to be safe. It has been left to succeeding generations to muffle up that shattering personality and surround him with an atmosphere of*

*tedium...a fitting household pet for pale curates and pious old ladies. He was tender to the unfortunate, patient with honest inquirers, humble; but he insulted clergymen...referred to King Herod as "that fox"; went to parties in disreputable company...assaulted indignant tradesmen and threw them and their belongings out of the temple...*

*Officialdom felt that the established order of things would be more secure without him. So they did away with God in the name of peace and quietness. (The Greatest Drama Ever Staged)*

And so he comes to startle us, to challenge us, to awaken us to true life. So he comes and makes detached neutrality impossible. He comes to you and me and forces us to decide whether or not to be his follower, his man, his woman.

So he comes to the sanctuary of your heart and mine and invites us to make the most important decision you and I can ever make – to follow him, to live for him, forever. Amen.

*Dr. John M. Buchanan served until January, 2012, as pastor of the Fourth Presbyterian Church in Chicago, Illinois. He served as Moderator of the 1996 General Assembly.*



## TRIPLE THREAT

By Rev. Carmen Lampe-Zeitler,  
director of Children and  
Families Urban Ministry in Des  
Moines

As I am writing this the 2012 Major League Baseball season is just a couple of weeks old. Occasionally in baseball there is a player who is a triple threat. Jackie Robinson was one of those rare players. He could hit. He could run. He could field. He led the league at one time or another in each of those categories.

One of my mentors for advocacy was something of a triple threat as well. Sister Bernadine Pieper was a member of the Congregation of the Humility of Mary and a lifelong educator. Bernadine earned a Ph.D. in biology and taught at the college level for years. Before she left the education field she also served as president of a college founded by her community.

As a scientist and an educator she developed a

deep regard for the land, and an equally deep commitment to prudent land use and protection. In her advocacy for care of the land, she developed (whether intentional or not) a very effective model for advocacy in general—a sort of triple threat of advocacy.

Bernadine's approach to advocacy for the land began on a *personal level*. She planted a great organic vegetable garden every summer. She planted and cared for perennial flower gardens and a rich variety of trees. On a *community level* she helped to restore and care for a stretch of native prairie in the small town in Iowa where she lived. And she helped educate the community about the seasons and value of the prairie by writing articles for the local newspaper and hosting field trips for school children. Bernadine's approach to advocacy extended to a *policy level* as well. She participated at the state and the national level in organizations that promoted policies related to land use and protection.



Bernadine's approach to advocacy for the land had a personal level, a community level and a policy level. She had a personal commitment to and engagement in the change for which she advocated. She educated and engaged her community with regard to that change also. She advocated for change at a policy level as well. She was a triple threat.

This past year saw the demise of an advocacy organization that was also a triple threat. Mothers Acting Up (MAU). MAU was a movement of mothers and others publicly and passionately advocating for the world's children. Although the organization is no more, a great loss to the advocacy landscape, their approach can and should continue. MAU did advocacy by inspiring, educating, and engaging mothers and others to prioritize children in our corporate and public policies. MAU believed that when mothers lead, generations of global citizens will follow. In their annual "handbook for passionately and publicly advocating for the world's children" MAU called for inspiration, education, and engagement on a personal level, a community level and a policy level. (Come to think of it, maybe they were a

hexagonal threat! Triple threat times two!)

The handbook itself was a daily call to advocacy that is multi-leveled, multi-faceted, multi-dimensional. On every page were

- ❖ stories from mothers and others, school children and CEOs, teachers and poets, families and friends telling about adventures in advocacy
- ❖ calendar dates that could be turned into opportunities for advocacy—from Dr. Seuss' birthday to Mother's Day, Juneteenth to World Environment Day (Bernadine would have made the most of that date), International Day of Families to Universal Children's Day
- ❖ ways to take action—from getting outside to breathe in some sanity to reading independent news sources, from helping children host a lemonade stand to buy a tree for the local playground to visiting a state legislator's office, from hosting a book club to gnashing our teeth less and imagining more

One of the appealing things about the MAU triple threat approach was the exuberance at the heart of their approach. Their trademark symbol

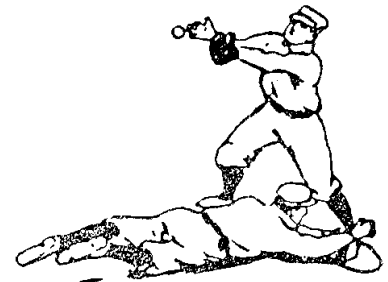
was a mother on stilts. Why? Because

- ❖ You're never so visible as when you are walking on stilts—and advocating for children means getting really visible
- ❖ You can't stand still on stilts, literally, and activism is all about building momentum
- ❖ Walking on stilts creates a media event out of humble gatherings
- ❖ Stilts transforms one's self image; you can do anything once you have walked on stilts

As advocates for the environment, for the well-being of children, for prison reform, for peace, for civil rights, the triple threat approach could serve us well. There is nothing like having a *personal* experience to make us passionate about advocacy. There is a *community* full of advocates waiting to be born if we are able to communicate through our action something of the urgency change. *Policy* made at every level is made better by advocates who have both personal experience and community connections. The three together are a powerful triple threat.

This year is the 65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Jackie Robinson breaking the color barrier in Major League Baseball—in that

act and in his life beyond baseball he was an advocate for civil rights. As an advocate he was a triple threat as well—he personally did what it took to end racial segregation in Major League Baseball; beyond baseball he helped establish a black-owned and operated commercial bank based in Harlem and a construction company to build affordable homes for families with low incomes in the community; raised funds, served on the board and marched with the NAACP to change policy. Jackie was a triple threat advocate as well as a triple threat ballplayer!



Being a triple threat in baseball will happen for most of us only in our dreams, but triple threat advocacy is within anyone's reach. Play Ball!

**ECUMENICAL  
ADVOCACY DAYS  
Christian Voices for a  
Faithful Budget**

Ecumenical Advocacy Days (EAD) celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year—March 23-26 in Washington, D.C. EAD is

an annual gathering of men and women of faith who want to be a force for change for the betterment of all. Each year's high impact weekend, sponsored by the ecumenical Christian community, is grounded in biblical witness and shared traditions of justice, peace and integrity of creation. The goal is to strengthen our Christian voice and mobilize for advocacy on specific U.S. domestic and international policy issues.



In this era of economic and political urgency, as critical decisions are being made about U.S. federal budget priorities and as national elections are hastily approaching, Ecumenical Advocacy Days for 2012 asked, "**Is THIS the Fast I Seek?**"

Three days of plenary speakers and workshops explored **Economy, Livelihood and Our National Priorities** through the lens of Isaiah 58. Nearly 800 Christians came together seeking a global economy and a national budget that break the yokes of injustice, poverty, hunger and unemployment throughout the world, heeding Isaiah's call to become "repairers of the breach

and restorers of streets to live in."

Through Isaiah, God challenges a nation that on one hand professes a delight in seeking God and knowing God's ways, yet serves self interests, oppresses workers, neglects poor and hungry people and quarrels to no good end. Isaiah calls the nation to a righteous practice that loosens the bonds of injustice, lets the oppressed go free, and breaks every yoke. As Christian disciples, EAD participants attempt to live into Christ's fulfillment of Isaiah's prophetic witness (Luke 4).

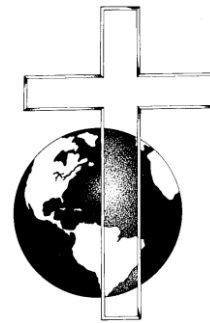
The 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary gathering included worship, celebration, dialogue and inspiration, equipping all to speak boldly as people of faith. Rousing preachers, stimulating theologians and internationally known policy experts offered a faith-based vision for a just economy and a healthy livelihood along with training on key policy issues. New this year were a variety of sessions focusing on grassroots advocacy skills training. All of this culminated on Monday with Congressional visits on Capitol Hill.

*Over 200 Presbyterians from across the country made up the largest denominational group at EAD 2012!*

*Three participants from the Presbytery of Des Moines (Connie DePond & Rev. Liz Knott, Des Moines Westminster, and Marcia McAdoo, Ankeny) offer their reflections on the weekend, which included a day of training sponsored by the Washington Office of Public Witness and the staff of Compassion, Peace and Justice, PC(USA):*

**Connie:**

Why did I want to go to Advocacy Days and what did I learn? In the everyday life of the church I often feel a lack of enthusiasm for social justice issues which I call Kingdom values. Everyone who attends Ecumenical Advocacy Days (EAD) is focused on these Kingdom values! The energy is palpable and exciting! I leave these conferences refreshed and energized to continue to bring these important issues into public consciousness.



EAD makes several tracts available and participants may stay with one tract for the duration of the conference or choose to



attend offerings from any tract of interest. There are training sessions on how to speak to Congresspersons about the issues. On the last day of the conference we are encouraged to visit with our Senators and Representatives.

The tracts include Africa, Asia Pacific, Domestic U.S., Eco-Justice, Global Economic Justice, Latin American, Middle East, Peace and Global Security. Topics included injustice, militarization, human rights, taxes, health care, economic inequality, corporate power, international debt and much more. Advocacy Training Workshops span the gamut from letter writing, voter registration, message in the media, In-district and In-state meetings, from charity to advocacy, and influencing members of Congress without lobbying.

**Marcia:**

Over the course of the weekend there were several quotes that touched me:

“Christ calls us not to do charity, but to do justice.”  
(from workshop by Presbyterian Disaster Assistance staff at CPJ Training Day)



“Don’t allow the political climate to divide us as faithful witnesses to the church. We’re either righteous or unrighteous, saved or unsaved. Don’t accept the political labels of conservative, moderate or liberal. The labels divide and conquer us. We are together seeking God’s vision for a global community and sharing in God’s abundance.”

(Rev. J. Herbert Nelson,  
Director of the Office of Public  
Witness, PC(USA))

“The power of faith is the understanding that God owns it all.”

(Rev. J. Herbert Nelson)

**Liz:**

**A BUDGET  
COMMUNICATES  
VALUES**

It was an uncommonly hot March day when some 200 Presbyterians from across the country gathered at New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C., to participate in an all-day training in major social justice issues. The sponsoring body was the staff of the General Assembly. I chose to go to the workshop on the federal budget.

A budget conveys what an individual, group and nation propose is most strategically important to them i.e., what they truly value. An ongoing task is to check for congruity regarding what we say we

value and how we actually expend our resources financial, material and human.

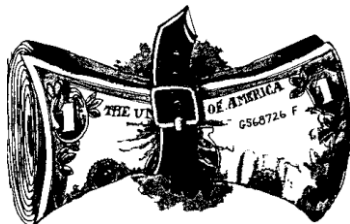
There were about thirty-five of us crowded into a small room. We were given a copy of President Obama’s proposed 2013 budget, a blank sheet of paper with a large circle on it, and then divided into six groups, each group receiving a roll of 100 pennies. Our task was to create our own budget priorities distributing pennies signifying percentages to our areas of concern. What an exciting challenge to develop a moral and/or faithful budget according to Christian kingdom values i.e., the values that Jesus demonstrated in his welcoming relationship with individuals, his healing and teaching ministry.



The various groups had a great time. In our group, we immediately reduced military spending by 50%, inserted a new item for peacemaking, increased the following areas: veterans benefits, the interest on the debt, energy and environment, science, housing and community and transpor-

tation. Of course there were a variety of group responses to making the federal budget a more moral document filled with compassion for our neighbor. See the President's proposed budget below.

Why don't you try taking the budgets proposed by our two political parties and see who and what it serves, then see how you can influence the political platforms in making our federal budget more compassionate and growing the common good. Each of us can make a difference. The budget is a critical marker of who we are becoming as a nation. Let's make a difference for peace and justice and the common good.



**President Obama's Proposed 2013 Budget:**

- 34% Social Security
- 4% Veterans Benefits
- 1% Energy & Environment
- 24% Medicare & Health
- 4% Food & Agriculture
- 1% Science
- 18% Military
- 2% Housing & Community
- 1% International Affairs
- 7% Interest on Debt
- 2% Education
- 1% Government
- 2% Transportation

**PRESBYTERIANS  
AND POLITICS:  
Disturbers of  
Government**

*Witness in Washington Biblical & Theological Perspectives, Presbyterian Church (USA), January 2009, by the Rev. Gradye Parsons, Stated Clerk PC(USA)*

Francis Makemie, considered the father of the American Presbyterian church, preached in New York in 1707 without an official license to do so. Edward Hyde, third Earl of Clarendon, also known as Lord Cornbury, governor of New York, had him arrested and imprisoned for two months. Cornbury wrote that Makemie was "a preacher, a doctor of physic, a merchant, an attorney...and...worst of all, a disturber of governments."



It has been said that so many Presbyterians followed Makemie's role with the government that King George described the Revolutionary War as the "Presbyterian War."

It should come as no surprise that Presbyterians have a long history

of engagement with the secular political order. In fact, well before Makemie, John Calvin understood the need of the role of civil authority. Calvin was opposed to any argument that tried to say that Christian liberty meant the absence of civil government.

In addition, The Westminster Confession of Faith states:

*And because the powers which God hath ordained, and the liberty which Christ hath purchased, are not intended by God to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve one another; they who, upon pretense of Christian liberty, shall oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance of God.*

The Book of Confessions, 6:111

At the first General Assembly in 1789, commissioners continued this engagement with the government by approving a letter to President Washington that expressed their delight at his appointment to the "first office in the nation."



So, on the one hand, it would appear that those of the Reformed tradition have been defenders of the role of government, and on the other hand, disturbers of governments.

Presbyterians have argued with the government about many issues, such as slavery, education, temperance, labor conditions, segregation, war, and the environment. At times, the General Assembly has spoken for the vast majority of the church, and at other times, the assembly has spoken a prophetic word to itself and the world.

In 1966, the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS) approved a short, well-written document titled "The Theological Basis for Christian Social Action." The paper succinctly makes the case for the church's role as a disturber of governments. Here are the few gems from the document for our consideration:

*Moreover, if the Great Commission is not simply an unfortunate necessity but a great privilege, then our responsibility to bear witness in word and action to this God in a social context is not a task we grudgingly and unwillingly **must** accept, but one we are privileged to accept, thankfully and joyfully.*

*If we bear witness and serve the Lord, then, as a church and as individuals, we have a clear responsibility to concern ourselves with the social and political sphere also. To say nothing and to do nothing in this sphere is to deny our own Gospel. It is to say that there are at least some areas in the world and in our own lives where God is not Lord...*

*In the complexities of political, social and economic affairs, there is seldom any single unambiguously "Christian" solution. The church and individual Christians will choose from the available solutions that one which seems most clearly to **point in the direction** of the will of God. To say nothing and do nothing because no single solution is perfect, is not to take a Christian position, but silently to support whatever status quo happens to prevail; or to leave change entirely to others – and thus refuse altogether to try to bring the will of God to bear on the life of the world.*

To disturb governments, to speak truth to power, and to engage in the political context of the age has been seen within the Reformed tradition as an understanding of what it means to bear witness to the gospel. It is also how we in the Reformed

tradition understand vocation: We – ministers, teachers, nurses, plumbers, all of us – serve God in and through our vocation and are called to a ministry of witness wherever we are.



## **JOINING HANDS Who We Are and What We Do**

*The Presbytery of Des Moines is one of six presbyteries nationwide currently engaged in Joining Hands partnerships around the world – Des Moines with Egypt. Joining Hands models a new vision of global mission:*

The Joining Hands initiative is an innovative way to mobilize people in focused campaigns to tackle systemic causes of hunger both in the United States and abroad as a witness to the wholeness of God's creation. Joining Hands is committed to a

holistic hunger ministry and its work is integrated with the mandate of the Presbyterian Hunger Program, outlined in the *Common Affirmation on World Hunger*. The five components of the mandate are: relief of chronic hunger; development assistance; public policy advocacy; lifestyle integrity; and hunger education.

Both presbyteries and congregations are invited to work within a denominational coalition that joins with marginalized people in eight countries, including churches, nonprofit organizations, community groups and members of other faith traditions – what we call communities of mission practice, who in disciplined ways, engage the world together through common spiritual and ethical values. Rather than replicate project-based mission, the goal of Joining Hands is to organize together in both the Northern and Southern hemispheres to campaign for peaceful social change in a globalized world.

Most of the issues identified by global partners as contributing to poverty abroad are also relevant in the United States. This effort is not about going *somewhere else* to do mission. Instead, we look

together at the immense troubles we all face on a small planet and pull together in prayer, research, repentance, and in a process of mutual transformation that reflects our shared commitment to restoring the wholeness of God's creation by contributing to the building of a more peaceful and just world.

**We envision a growing and spiritually-grounded movement that maintains an ethical focus on:**

- addressing the root causes of injustice, inequity and the lack of human dignity;
- promoting the self-sufficiency of poor and marginalized groups;
- confronting and influencing the structures of exploitation and injustice.

**We see a movement that:**

- grows strong through knowledge, communication, education and skill-building;
- values ethnic, religious, cultural and economic diversity;
- draws upon common threads of spirituality and unites peoples of diverse faith in worldwide action;
- involves congregations in global partnership;
- models democratic and participatory decision-making at all levels.

**We envision a transforming partnership that is:**

- characterized by equitable relationships based on mutual respect and not determined by money;
- built upon frequent exchange visits between and among networks including people of all ages;
- strengthened by open, frequent and effective communication.

**We look forward to:**

- effectiveness in advocacy for change;
- opportunities for coordinated action.

**Our campaign issues include:**

- Food Sovereignty;
- Water Privatization and Pollution;
- Extractive Industries;
- Land Grab;
- Trade Reform.

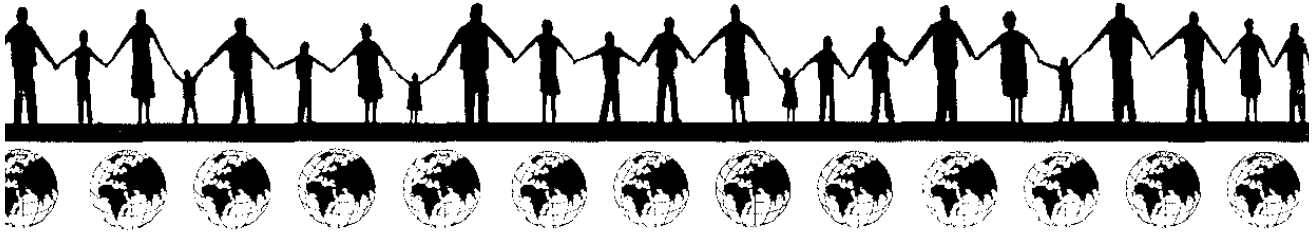
**COUNTRY NETWORKS:**

- Bolivia
- Cameroon
- Egypt
- El Salvador
- Haiti
- India
- Peru
- Sri Lanka

**PRESBYTERY PARTNERS:**

- San Francisco
- Cascades
- Chicago
- Twin Cities Area
- Giddings Lovejoy
- Des Moines

[www.pcusa.org/joininghands](http://www.pcusa.org/joininghands)



## AS CONGREGATIONS JOINING HANDS WITH PARTNERS IN EGYPT:

We acknowledge that:

- ◆ We are accountable to God;
- ◆ We are called to listen to everyone as we seek to discern God’s leading;
- ◆ Our way of doing God’s mission shall be mutual, respectful and caring;
- ◆ We will honor God’s preferential option for the least advantaged while being aware of our own position of privilege;
- ◆ We will seek a broad analysis that leads to shared understanding and perception of the personal and social roots of injustice.

We affirm that:

- ◆ We value networks and organizations, beyond the church, whose activities further God’s works in Christ;
- ◆ We are not in charge;
- ◆ We are not alone;
- ◆ We are in relationship.

from the Joining Hands Covenant  
Presbyterian Hunger Program

## ADVOCATES WANTED!

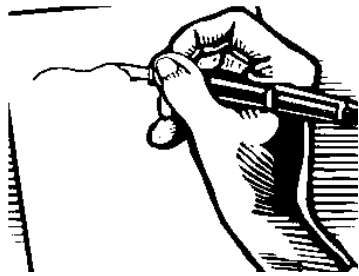


Are you willing to join a presbytery-wide network of advocates? The Social Ministries Task Force and the Joining Hands Coordinating Team ask you to add your voice to those of other Presbyterians on behalf of poor and hungry brothers and sisters next door and around the world.

The actions are non-partisan and the requests are guided by decisions of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA). Some messages will be directed to those elected to public office; some to government offices in other countries, some to

corporations, and some to your local newspaper.

If you are willing to be a compassion, peace and justice advocate, you will be asked to write an occasional letter or make an occasional telephone call.



Writing letters to decision makers is simple and should only take a few minutes of your time. In this digital age, it may seem anachronistic to write personal letters when it is so easy to click on and send a form email. But because it's so easy, e-mailboxes are flooded with form emails. Research shows that the volume of form emails has decreased their effectiveness. But writing a personal letter or personal email tells the recipient that you are so concerned about the issue that you've taken the time to write to him or her about it. If you are writing to a member of Congress, his or her staffer logs each letter; the number of letters indicates how serious the issue is to a member's constituents.

Here are four simple steps for writing an effective letter:

1. Write your name and address at the end of your letter and on the envelope. If you are writing to an elected official, they will know you are one of the people they represent.
2. Ask for a specific action—to co-sponsor and/or vote for an upcoming bill; to look into a situation under a corporation's purview; to investigate acts that have endangered certain individuals or communities.
3. Give reasons why. Share your personal story about what motivated you to write. Letters with personal stories are the most compelling and effective.
4. Send your letter! If you are writing to a member of Congress, address your letter to:

Sen. \_\_\_\_\_  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Rep. \_\_\_\_\_  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Washington Office of Public Witness and Joining Hands (PC(USA)) provide names and addresses, fax numbers or email addresses for actions they request. Sometimes you will receive a sample letter that you can personalize. On occasion—due to sensitive circumstances requiring very specific language—you might be asked to add your name to a pre-written letter.

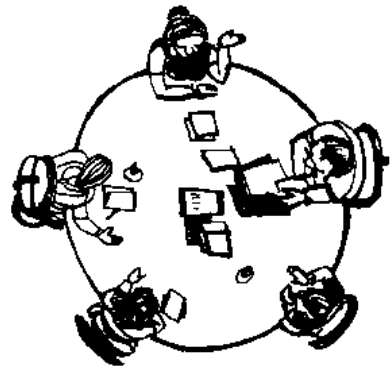
Of course, you can decide for yourself whether or not you wish to write or call on any particular issue.

The goal is to establish a network of willing advocates who will respond quickly when asked.

Does this sound like something you could do? A quick email to:

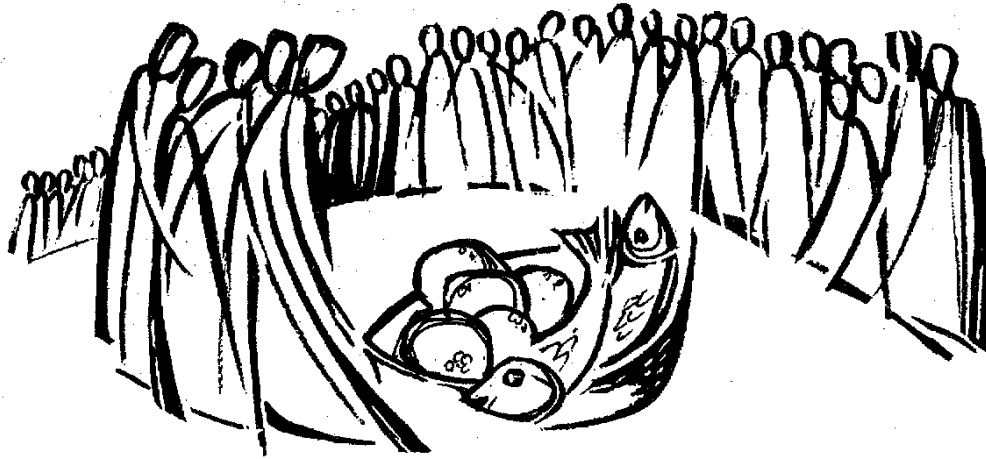
[neitherthecat@gmail.com](mailto:neitherthecat@gmail.com)

is all it takes to become a compassion, peace and justice partner!





# GRAINS OF TRUTH



**Not everything that counts can be counted,  
and not everything that can be counted counts.**

from a poster hanging on Albert Einstein's office door at Princeton University



There is always room  
for the people you love,  
even if the house  
is crowded.

Tanzanian proverb

## **Broken Bread**

Presbytery of Des Moines  
2400 – 86<sup>th</sup> Street  
Urbandale, IA 50322-4306

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit No. 1689  
Des Moines, Iowa



### ***IN THIS ISSUE:***

What Christianity Is Not

Triple Threat

Ecumenical Advocacy Days: Christian Voices for a Faithful Budget

Presbyterians and Politics: Disturbers of Governments

Joining Hands: Who We Are and What We Do

Advocates Wanted!

Grains of Truth