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Item 07-01

Resolution Calling for the Abolition of For-Profit Private Prisons

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy recommends that the 215th General Assembly (2003) approve the following resolution:

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s concern for prisoners has been established for almost a century. In 1910, the General Assembly declared that the church ought to stand:

> **For the development of a Christian spirit in the attitude of society toward offenders against the law. The Church holds that a Christian society must seek the reformation of offenders, and that it must endeavor to prevent the commission of crimes by furnishing a wholesome environment and by such education as will develop moral sense and industrial efficiency in the young (*Minutes*, PCUSA, 1910, Part I, p. 232).**

In 1915, another General Assembly said:

> **That we seek to discourage, wherever possible, the spirit of revenge and retaliation in dealing with . . . offenders, and insist that, while they should be dealt with firmly and justly for their own good and the protection of society; yet that it be done in a way which will not render them outcasts upon society, but will rather build up and restore to their proper place those who may be reformed (*Minutes*, PCUSA, 1915, Part I, p. 91).**

In agreement with the statements of the 1910 and 1915 General Assemblies, we believe that the ultimate goal of the criminal justice system should be "restorative justice": "addressing the hurts and the needs of the victim, the offender, and the community in such a way that all—victim, offender, and community—might be healed" (*Resolution on Restorative Justice, Minutes*, 2002, Part I, p. 576). We realize that, given the limits of our knowledge and understanding at this time, some may need to be incarcerated for life because they are a danger to themselves and others. But we hope that in the future, advances in working with such prisoners through spiritual, medical, rehabilitative, psychological, and educational techniques may some day make it possible for every prisoner to be successfully rehabilitated and restored to their community and family.

We have, along with other citizens, trusted the oversight of this responsibility to our governmental leaders. This must continue to be their responsibility; it cannot be delegated from the public to the private sector. However, the shortage of funds that many governments are experiencing makes them receptive to offers from the private sector to build and/or operate prisons. Since the goal of for-profit private prisons is earning a profit for their shareholders, there is a basic and fundamental conflict with the concept of rehabilitation as the ultimate goal of the prison system. We believe that this is a glaring and significant flaw in our justice system and that for-profit private prisons should be abolished.

The question of whether human beings should be incarcerated, of how they should be treated while in prison, of when they will be released, can not be answered by whether or not these steps will create profit for a corporation. In a humane society, in a democratic society, there are some things that can never be for sale, even and especially when they involve "one of the least of these followers of mine." Even if for-profit private prisons could achieve significant cost savings to the taxpayer, which in fact they have not been able to do, they would still be morally unacceptable. Private prisons are not an economic but a deep religious and ethical issue, a cornerstone of our collective work to put justice back into the so-called "criminal justice system." The moral concern and authority of the faith community make it critical that our voices be heard and our weight be felt.

Therefore, the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) recommends that the 215th General Assembly (2003) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) do the following:

A. Approve the *Resolution Calling for the Abolition of For-Profit Private Prisons* with recommendations.

B. Receive the background rationale and appendixes (to be included in the *Minutes*).

C. Approve the report as a whole for churchwide study and implementation.

D. Direct the Office of the General Assembly to publish the entire report, *Resolution Calling for the Abolition of For-Profit Private Prisons*, with background, appendixes, and with a related study/action guide and place the document as a whole on the PC(USA)'s Web site, making available a copy for each requesting session or middle governing body; and, direct the Stated Clerk to notify the entire church it is available on the Web site.

E. Direct the Stated Clerk to encourage individual members, sessions and middle governing bodies to give prayerful attention to the report as help in study and advocating for the abolition of for-profit private prisons in the communities where they live and work and nationally.

F. Approve the following actions:

1. Direct the Presbyterian Washington Office (PWO), in partnership with the Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns (ACREC) and the Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns (ACWC) to

a. work towards comprehensive Federal legislation to completely and permanently ban all for-profit private prisons, jails, and detention centers from the United States;

b. intervene to prevent the renewal of current federal government contracts with for-profit private prison corporations;

c. consult and coordinate with other denominations, as well as with ecumenical and interfaith groups, to advocate for the permanent abolition of for-profit private prisons; and

d. provide information to other levels of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to educate them on the issue and to encourage their participation in the campaign to abolish for-profit private prisons.

2. Urge the middle governing bodies and members of local congregations to work for state, county, and/or municipal legislation and administrative actions that eliminate particular elements of the for-profit private prison system, pending its ultimate abolition by federal law. Such legislation and administrative action would include

a. banning the interstate commerce in private prisoners;

b. banning the construction of speculation prisons;

c. banning the use of private prisons to house juveniles; and

d. preventing the renewal of current state, county, and municipal government contracts with for-profit private prison corporations.

3. Direct the Mission Responsibility Through Investment Committee (MRTI) to explore with the General Assembly investing agencies strategies to lead Lehman Brothers to discontinue the practice of providing investment capital for the building of for-profit private prisons.

4. Call upon middle governing bodies and sessions that have endowments, as well as seminaries, church-related colleges and universities, to consider participation in the campaign to abolish for-profit private prisons, including the Lehman Campaign.

5. Encourage all Presbyterians, while working to abolish permanently all for-profit private prisons, also to work to protect the health, welfare, and well-being of the prisoners that are held in these facilities, in ways that do not recognize the legitimacy of these institutions or contribute to their continuation.

6. Urge the Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns (ACREC) and the Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns (ACWC) to work to ensure that for-profit private prisons are held absolutely accountable to all existing laws and to stringent provisions relating to prisons and the protection of prisoners and that, in the case of failure to show this accountability, contracts with them be terminated.

7. Urge local justice communities to work in collaboration with other justice-minded entities, including local interfaith bodies.

8. Urge all publications and other communications vehicles of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to develop articles, reports, and other educational materials designed to educate, motivate, and activate Presbyterians to participate in the campaign to abolish for-profit private prisons and in particular in the Lehman Campaign.

9. Encourage the General Assembly Council, through its National Ministries Division, Social Justice program area, to focus Criminal Justice Sunday in 2004 on the campaign to abolish for-profit private prisons.

10. Urge Presbyterian Women (PW) to make the campaign to abolish for-profit private prisons a focus of their ongoing work.

11. Urge Presbyterians who are ecumenical staff to advocate for making the campaign to abolish for-profit private prisons a critical focus of the Summer 2004 meeting of the National Association of Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Staff.

12. Call upon the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) to monitor the actions listed above and to report to the 217th General Assembly (2006).

Through this resolution, we call upon the church to reaffirm and act on the specific recommendations of previous General Assemblies regarding criminal justice and correctional systems, striving for justice regardless of gender, ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, and national origin, especially for all of those who are affected by the criminal justice and correctional systems of this society.

Summary Rationale

[Note: The full text of the *Rationale* for "Resolution Calling for the Abolition of For-Profit Private Prisons" can be found at our Web site: http://www.pcusa.org/generalassembly, click on "Business Before the Assembly." If you don't have access to the Web and would like a paper copy of the full text of this rationale, please call 1-888-728-7228, extension 8018.]

This resolution is in response to the following referral: *Overture 99-35. On Opposing the Privatization of Prisons—From the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta, Item 3.* (*Minutes*, 1999, Part I, pp. 81, 620).

The 211th General Assembly (1999) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) approved an overture on opposing the privatization of prisons, which included two recommendations asking the assembly to "oppose the privatization of prisons as an abdication of responsibility on the part of governments and an abhorrent way of making profit by punishing prisoners"; and to "express grave concern at the trend to encourage construction of prisons, whether public or private, as a means of local 'economic development'" (*Minutes*, 1999, Part I, pp. 81, 620). This assembly also approved the following:

> 3. Direct [ed] the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy to gather information about current policy debates, including those [about] "prison privatization," and examine areas of potential conflict of interest on the part of legislators.
>
> 4. Call[ed] upon Presbyterians to consider prayerfully the issues surrounding corrections policies at the federal, state and local levels; to engage in fact-finding about correctional facilities in their own localities; to encourage visits with prisoners and their

families; to explore alternatives to incarceration as a response to nonviolent crime; and to encourage legislators at all levels to promote rehabilitative rather than punitive policies in our prisons.

5. Encourag[ed] all governing bodies to investigate whether they have investments in the prison industry and to consider the advisability of divestment.

6. Direct[ed] Mission Responsibility Through Investment to ascertain what Presbyterian funds are invested in the prison industry and to make recommendations concerning the future policy of such investments to the General Assembly. (*Minutes*, 1999, Part I, pp. 81, 620)

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) has now, as directed by the overture, completed its deliberations. The committee, in the above resolution, strongly endorses but also expands and makes more concrete the directives included in the overture. Specifically, the committee urges the 215th General Assembly (2003) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to call for the permanent and total abolition of all for-profit private prisons. In the resolution, the committee also lays out the steps that the church must take in order to bring about this result.

[Note: Text is a replacement. Please discard Item 07-02 as received in RGA I and insert this text in its place.]

Item 07-02

Living Faithfully with Families in Transition

A. The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy recommends that the 215th General Assembly (2003) take the following action on the social witness policy statement "Living Faithfully with Families in Transition":

1. Approve the theological affirmations and policy principles and recommendations.

2. Receive the background rationale and appendixes (to be included in the *Minutes*).

3. Approve the report as a whole for churchwide study and implementation.

4. Direct the Office of the General Assembly to publish the entire report, "Living Faithfully with Families in Transition," with background, bibliography, appendixes, and with a related study/action guide; and, direct the Stated Clerk to distribute it in published form to the middle governing bodies, their resource centers, and the libraries of the theological seminaries, making additional copies available for sale to aid study and implementation efforts in the church, and to place the document as a whole on the denomination's Web site.

5. Direct the Stated Clerk to encourage individual members, sessions, middle governing bodies to give prayerful attention to the report as help in ministering to the needs of families in their own homes, congregations, and in the communities where they live and work.

6. Commend enthusiastically the members of the Task Force on "Changing Families" and express to them the church's gratitude for their work and contribution to the whole church.

B. Theological Affirmations. In light of our biblical, confessional and theological heritage as it relates to changing families in our contemporary context, the following affirmations shall be approved as a theological basis for the ministry and mission of the church to families:

1. Family life, in a variety of forms, is integral to created life, common to all peoples, and a vehicle through which humans are formed. Christian families have the responsibility of teaching and practicing the beliefs and values that exhibit faithfulness to the God revealed in Jesus Christ in whatever culture they reside. In particular, John Calvin's concept of the family as "little church," that nurtures its members in the faith, and the Helvetic Confession are strong statements affirming the absolute importance of family-sustaining activities as "holy and truly good works" equal in value to all other human activities.

2. Biblical traditions present God as working through diverse family structures—structures that contemporary women and men would judge as no longer adequate for the values of equality and inclusiveness we now see as God's intention for us. Therefore, we are assured that God's redeeming and reconciling Spirit continues to work in and through many forms of family. We are humbled to realize that families serve divine purposes beyond their own or their culture's needs. Ultimately the structure of one's family is not as important as how we allow God's life giving and redeeming spirit to shape and work through our families.

3. As important as our family life is, the biblical traditions strongly warn not to promote one's own family's welfare over the inclusion and well-being of others: particularly the most vulnerable in one's society, the poor, and also neighbors, strangers, sojourners, and even enemies. Jesus made clear that no family structure or relationship, whether defined by blood, law, or culture, should be exalted over our

loyalty to God. Christians are called into a new "family" whose members are bound to one another by God's grace in Jesus Christ—a community of disciples empowered by the Holy Spirit to reflect God's love and justice for one another and for the world. Therefore, all forms of family can be instruments that open us to service and participation in the larger community as servants of God. As "little church" the Christian family nurtures its own, but does not nurture solely its own. The Christian family welcomes its own, but does not welcome solely its own. As part of God's family, the Christian family is kin to all.

4. The church, as a community of moral discernment, prophetic judgment, forgiveness, and healing, lives in life-giving tension with the norms of its culture. By grace the church risks living on the edge of social change by calling society to account for its treatment of families. Such grace bids us to work toward loving and just relationships in families and in the social order in conformity with the Reign of God. Thus, obedience to Christ is "the ground of the church's duty and freedom to reform itself in life and doctrine as new occasions, in God's providence, may demand."[1]

C. Policy Principles and Recommendations. In light of our biblical and confessional tradition, and in concert with current sociological research on U.S. families, the church commits itself to being an inclusive and caring community of faith in which many forms of family are valued, nurtured, and supported. These forms include egalitarian marriage whether it is in an original family, a stepfamily, or an adoptive family. It includes families of single parents, single persons, couples without children, and extended families, as well as families of different racial/ethnic heritages and interfaith families. It includes families whose members may be elderly, divorced, disabled, or widowed, and families with members of homosexual orientation. Today, there are many configurations of people who lovingly bond as family, such as mutually adoptive families, organization-adopted families, shared parenting, grandparents rearing grandchildren, and those known as the sandwich generation. We celebrate the redemptive possibilities for life in committed and responsible relationships based on the human capacity for intimacy, mutuality, and community that is God's gift to all.

1. The 215th General Assembly (2003) calls upon the church to renew its commitment to upholding the work of families, the importance of human nurturance, as holy service to God of equal importance with all other human activities. Therefore, it calls upon the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as well as upon political and economic institutions to commit to social and economic policies and practices that include

- **increased time for family life;**
- **adequate, family-sustaining wages for all families;**
- **reduced economic and consumer pressure on all families.**

2. The 215th General Assembly (2003) calls upon the church to renew its commitment to resisting forces that weaken, deface, and jeopardize family well-being, including

- **U.S. cultural values of materialism, consumerism, and individualism;**
- **economic forces that absorb family time and increase economic stress on all families;**
- **discrimination based on race, gender, class, age, disability, or sexual orientation.**

3. The 215th General Assembly (2003) calls upon the church to renew its commitment to nurturing and sustaining family life in all of the cultures of all the peoples who comprise the entire human family. The church acknowledges and confesses that the same forces which weaken the well-being of families in the United States, and which too often originate in the economic and cultural values of the United States, also threaten families around the globe.

4. The 215th General Assembly (2003) calls upon the church to reject principles or policies that would stigmatize any persons, and particularly the most vulnerable persons (children, the poor, the disabled, and so forth), based on family form. We refuse to stigmatize those who are single or those who are childless whether by choice or unchosen circumstance.

5. The 215th General Assembly (2003) approves as a policy recommendation "A Vision for Family Ministries," which was adopted by the Education and Congregational Nurture Unit of the PC(USA) and shared with congregations to aid them in the support and nurture of, and advocacy for, families. [This policy can be found in Appendix A of the Full-Text Rationale, which can be found on the Web site http://www.pcusa.org/generalassembly.]

6. The 215th General Assembly (2003) urges the General Assembly Council to develop resources that will make the information in *Living Faithfully with Families in Transition*, available to and pragmatically helpful for congregations.

7. Following in the tradition of previous General Assemblies, the church renews its call for an enlarged vision of social support for families in the twenty-first century.[2] Therefore, the 215th General Assembly (2003)

- **Renews its commitment to previous General Assembly actions concerning hunger, poverty, and economic justice, including the church's positions related to full employment, the minimum wage, economic rights, living wages, health care, the feminization of poverty, and social policies that address families in poverty;**

- **Renews its commitment to previous General Assembly actions regarding racial and gender justice including the statement of the 195th General Assembly (1983), "Comprehensive Strategies on Racial Justice" (*Minutes*, 1983, Part I, pp. 87, 459ff); the statements of the 211th General Assembly (1999), "Facing Racism: A Vision of the Beloved Community" (*Minutes*, 1999, Part I. pp. 79, 274ff) and "Building Community Among Strangers" (Ibid, pp. 29–32, 401ff); and the statements of the 195th General Assembly (1983) supporting economic justice and equal legal rights for women (*Minutes*, 1983, Part I., pp. 474, 475);**

- **Renews its commitment to previous General Assembly actions concerning justice in the workplace, including the statement of the 207th General Assembly (1995), "Principles of Vocation and Work" (*Minutes*, 1995, Part I, pp. 426–27), asserting that "conditions of paid employment, including compensation and working conditions, should sustain and nurture the dignity of individuals, the well-being of households and families, the social cohesiveness of communities, and the integrity of the global environment" (Ibid, 426) and that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will itself seek to be a model employer; and the statement of the 200th General Assembly (1988) on women's work, "All the Livelong Day: Women and Work" (*Minutes*, 1988, Part I, pp. 82–83, 623ff);**

- **Renews its commitment to the General Assembly statements of 1992, 1988, 1984, and 1977 regarding pornography, in which Presbyterians are called to oppose the use of pornography and violence in all media and to bring their influence to bear so that "media will act to strengthen moral values" (1993);**

- **Renews its commitment to previous General Assembly actions related to the well-being of children, including the commitment of the 189th General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (1977) to uphold the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (*Minutes*, UPCUSA, 1977, Part I, pp. 542–43); the 205th General Assembly (1993) statement, "A Vision for Children and the Church" (*Minutes*, 1993, Part I, pp. 132, 643ff); the 211th General Assembly (1999) statement regarding adoption of children with special needs (*Minutes*, 1999, Part I, pp. 76–77, 635); and, in particular, draws the church's attention to the 212th General Assembly (2000)'s call to ensure that every child in our nation has a healthy, fair, and safe environment in which to grow, including but not limited to adequate shelter, food, clothing and medical care; protection from abuse, gun violence, rape and drugs;**

assurance that every child is "school ready" at the age of kindergarten entrance; and access to an adequate public education that will allow the full development of each child's gifts (*Minutes*, 2000, Part I, p. 467);

- **Renews its commitment to the 213th General Assembly (2001) policy statement, "Turn Mourning into Dancing: A Policy Statement on Healing Domestic Violence," that calls the church to minister to both survivors and abusers and to work for social change that makes the resort to violence unacceptable (*Minutes*, 2001, Part I, pp. 233ff);**

- **Renews its commitment to the 199th General Assembly (1987) statement, "A Call to Church Involvement in the Renewal of Public Education" in which Presbyterians affirm their commitment to assure that communities provide public schools of quality for all children, including education in critical thinking and global awareness (*Minutes*, 1987, Part I, pp. 479ff).**

Summary Rationale

[Note: The full text of the *Rationale* for "Living Faithfully with Families in Transition" can be found at our Web site: http://www.pcusa.org/generalassembly, click on "Business Before the Assembly." If you don't have access to the Web and would like a paper copy of the full text of this rationale, please call 1-888-728-7228, extension 8018.]

These recommendations are in response to the following referrals:

- *1997 Referral: 35.0087. Response to Recommendation to Call Upon the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy to Examine the Issue of Changing Families and Changing Social Structures that Support Families, Particularly Focusing on the Effects of These on Children—From the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy* (*Minutes*, 1997, Part I, pp. 44, 536).

- *Commissioners' Resolution 98-23. On Support of Families and Children* (*Minutes*, 1998, Part I, pp. 55, 748).

Almost every societal problem has the potential to have an impact on the family. Conversely, as the basic building block of society, the family can also be portrayed as being at the root of every social problem. Indeed, the family can too easily become a scapegoat and itself be defined as the problem. When this happens the family becomes the focal point for public debate and power politics. Ideological fault lines open up depending on how one views the issues facing families. Every political and religious faction feels entitled to state an opinion about what is wrong with the family and what must be done to fix it. The result, over the last three decades, has been an increasing abandonment of family-supporting social policies. To the extent that the Christian church has participated in this factionalism, we need to confess our sins and to seek reconciliation and common ground that will allow for both church and public policy to strengthen U.S. families.

In 1997, the 209th General Assembly called upon the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) to examine the issue of changing families and the social structures that support families, with a particular focus on the impact of these changes on children (*Minutes*, 1997, Part I, pp.44, 536). This was followed by a resolution calling upon the 210th General Assembly to establish a task force charged with exploring the issues, policies, and programs that would enable the church to support and nurture families and children (*Minutes*, 1998, Part I, pp.55, 748). Consequently, the ACSWP's Task Force on Changing Families has focused on both the contemporary characteristics and contexts of families, as well as on biblical and confessional guidance, in order to identify relevant theological principles and the policy recommendations that flow from them in shaping the church's support of contemporary families.

"Living Faithfully with Families in Transition" is the result of this study. Its investigation of the contemporary context of families begins with listening to the voices of families in Presbyterian congregations and then moves into extensive social science research. From this material, several conclusions became evident. First, multiple forms of the family have always existed in the U.S. due to differences in economic resources and racial

ethnic backgrounds. Second, since the 1950s a number of socioeconomic changes have occurred to influence, in particular, the shape of middle-income, white families. Most notable is the fact that economic stress, caused by falling real wages for most male workers since the 1970s, reductions in health and pension benefits, and increases in economic inequality, requires more wives and mothers to enter the wage workforce. Most families have responded by sending more people into the workforce, by working more hours, and by reducing the marital birth rate. This two-adult-earner family brings with it a number of issues: care of preschool children, care of children after school hours, care of other dependent persons, the juggling of family tasks with the demands of employment, and new gender roles for women and men. These same economic conditions make it more difficult for young people to establish themselves economically today. Thus, the age at first marriage is significantly higher than it was in the ’50s.

The increase in two-earner families is accompanied by an increase in single-mother families. Separation and divorce are the primary causes of single-mother families, followed closely by non-marital childbearing. The divorce rate, somewhat less than half of first marriages, seems to have leveled off but is still higher than that of other modern, industrialized countries. Expectations about marriage, economic stress, and challenges to traditional gender identities all play a role in divorce and in the cultural acceptance of divorce as a remedy for broken relationships. Poverty seems to be a major contributing factor to non-marital births among young women. The rate of non-marital births is itself skewed by an increase in cohabiting couples. All of these changes mean that many children will experience divorce, single parenting, and stepfamilies at some point in their lives. Research indicates that10–15 percent more of such children score below average on a variety of tests than do children of intact families. Much of that difference is explained by higher poverty rates for single-mother families. The quality of parental relations with children before, during, and after divorce is also a major factor in children’s wellbeing.

The task force also identified three aspects of modern U.S. culture that make family life difficult and that impact the church’s ministry with families: materialism, consumerism, and individualism. Materialism and consumerism place undue economic stress upon families at all economic levels, create false values that impact families’ values, and, with individualism, reinforce families’ tendencies to focus solely on self. Individualism shapes the institutions and public policies that influence families and on which families depend. Consequently, families face constant fragmenting pressures, from the demands of employment to the commodification of children’s activities. The church itself is not immune to these cultural values and may replicate fragmenting and individualistic values in its teachings and practices.

However, the church is called by God, through the biblical witness and through the Reformed tradition, to be a family formed by and responsive to alternative values. The history of the people of God, as evidenced in the Bible and church history, shows clearly that while family is an essential part of God’s creation there is no singular form of family, no ideal family form. Family forms, as creations of cultures, are multiple both in history, cross-culturally, and in contemporary U.S. society. Furthermore, the variety of family forms represented in the Bible and in Christian history all fall short of the values of equality, justice, generosity, and inclusiveness that the church now sees as God’s intent for human community. In particular, the biblical witness denounces family forms and practices that sustain and replicate social practices of unequal privilege and wellbeing. Jesus called his followers to replace allegiance to families based on kinship and patronage with allegiance to the family formed by faith in God. Christian families, in the diversity of their forms, in multiple times and places, are those that practice nurturance, not only of their own, but of neighbors, enemies, and those society labels as “the least.”

The church is called, then, to raise a prophetic voice in these times. The many social witness policies approved by the PC(USA) continue to be pertinent to the wellbeing of families and children. Increased advocacy for them is even more compelling in this era of reduced social and corporate support for families. The church must resist the temptation to raise up as ideal any one form of family and, thereby, to stigmatize other forms of families. It must resist the cultural temptation to idolize independence and to stigmatize dependence and interdependence. With courage, the church must address the destructive aspects of U.S. culture and call Christians to reclaim time, the resources of creation, social institutions, and the form of their family for God’s inclusive, mutually life-giving purposes. The church must be and proclaim God’s family of faith.

Item 07-03

Response to Referral on Hate Groups and Hate Crimes

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy recommends that the 215th General Assembly (2003) do the following:

1. Commend to individuals, congregations, and presbyteries for study and advocacy *When Hate Groups Comes to Town: A Handbook of Effective Community Responses*, faith-based edition, revised and updated in a third edition and published by the Center for Democratic Renewal, P.O. Box 50469, Atlanta, GA 30302; (404) 221-0025; www.thecdr.org. In addition, "Resolution on Paramilitary Activity in the United States of America" (*Minutes*, 1985, Part I, pp. 77, 382–86); "Joint Resolution on the Christian Identity Movement" (*Minutes*, 1987, Part I, pp. 58, 685–89); and "6-83 From the NCCC Governing Board" [National Anti-Klan Network] (*Minutes*, 1983, Part I, p. 559) are commended to the church for study.

2. Urge the General Assembly Council, through its Ministries Divisions and their program areas, to continue to work on these issues and promote the document for churchwide study and use.

Rationale

[This resolution is in response to the following referral: *Alternate Resolution:* Overture 95-36. *"Resolved" Item 5(1). On Directing ACSWP and ACREC to Study and Develop Recommendations on National Terrorism—From the Presbytery of Denver* (*Minutes*, 1995, Part I, pp. 73, 684).

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy recommends the ecumenically developed faith-based edition *When Hate Comes to Town: A Handbook of Effective Community Responses* in response to *Overtures 95-36* and *98-30*. This third edition of the document is revised, updated, and published by the Center for Democratic Renewal. The 211th General Assembly (1999), in anticipation of this newly developed resource, approved the following action:

> Continue to support the completion of the ecumenical work, "When Hate Groups Comes to Town: A Handbook for Community Responses," in which the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is a participant and sponsor in the collaboration with the Center for Democratic Renewal. (*Minutes*, 1999, Part I, p. 80)

When Hate Groups Comes to Town explores the meaning of hate crimes and racism with particular attention to racism and white supremacy, anti-Semitism, homophobia, and violence against women. It documents the extent and nature of hate groups and crimes in the United States and offers gripping illustrations and stories. Presbyterians and others who study the document will find guidance for greater understanding and education of the issues involved as well as inspiration and instruction for advocacy and action to counteract the influence of hate groups and hate crimes in their communities.

The Center for Democratic Renewal holds as its mission statement:

> Founded in 1979 as the National Anti-Klan Network, the Center for Democratic Renewal is a multi-racial organization that advances the vision of a democratic, diverse and just society free of racism and bigotry. It helps communities combat groups, movements and government practices that promote hatred and bigotry, and is committed to public policies based on equity and justice.

The General Assembly Council, through its National Ministries Division, has long supported the work of the Center for Democratic Renewal.

Item 07-04

Overture 03-09. On Expressing Concern to the General Motors Corporation Over Chevrolet's New Marketing Strategy—From the Presbytery of Detroit.

The Presbytery of Detroit respectfully overtures the 215th General Assembly (2003) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to approve the following resolution:

"The 215th General Assembly (2003) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) expresses its deep concern to the Chevrolet division of General Motors Corporation over Chevrolet's new marketing strategy that provides advertising sponsorship for the *Come Together and Worship* tour featuring Max Lucado as the primary evangelist and requests that Chevrolet discontinue all marketing strategies that seek to use religion for corporate economic gain."

Item 07-05

Overture 03-28. On Concurring with the "Action for Wellness and Healing for Our Present and Future Generations of Saint Lawrence Island Yupik People"—From the Presbytery of Yukon.

The Presbytery of Yukon overtures the 215th General Assembly (2003) to do the following:

1. Concur with the "Action for Wellness and Healing for Our Present and Future Generations of Saint Lawrence Island Yupik People," in agreeing that the secretary of defense must formally apologize in writing to the people of Saint Lawrence Island for the damage and suffering caused by the military occupation.

2. Make the military accountable for the responsible, complete cleanup of the formerly used military sites on Saint Lawrence Island in order to correct the environmental injustice. The lands and waters must be restored in order to protect the health and well being of the environment and health of Saint Lawrence Island Yupik people.

Rationale

Beginning in the 1950s, the United States military occupied sites at Gambell and Northeast Cape on Saint Lawrence Island.

The military operations left contamination, including massive fuel spills, solvents, PCBs, asbestos, explosive munitions, and heavy metals.

Research has demonstrated that Alaska Native populations are at higher health risk from certain substances that are toxic, persistent, and bio-accumulate in the environment, the food web, and in the human body. Studies have also shown that developing children, youth, elders, and those with chronic illnesses are particularly vulnerable to health effects caused by exposure to persistent and toxic chemicals.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency has recognized health and environmental effects of certain substances that are toxic, persistent and bio-accumulate, including unintentionally produced by-products, such as dioxin. Health effects may include nervous system damage, immune system problems, reproductive and developmental disorders, and cancers.

We are concerned that due to their land- and ocean-based subsistence lifestyle, native people from Saint Lawrence Island have higher exposure rates to contamination and are at higher risk as compared to other non-native populations. The military contamination is a serious environmental injustice for the people of Saint Lawrence Island.

Research has shown that contaminants from the military operations on Saint Lawrence Island have accumulated in the soils, waters, plants, and fish.

A recent study shows that significant PCB and persistent pesticide contamination has affected Saint Lawrence Island Yupik people. The highest levels of PCBs on Saint Lawrence Island were found in people who spent the most time at or near the formerly used military site at Northeast Cape. While some portion of these contaminants derives from atmospheric transport of contamination, the results show a greater elevation of PCBs in the blood of those individuals who used Northeast Cape for traditional or occupational purposes. The PCB contamination from the formerly used military site at Northeast Cape has resulted in increased human exposure. Significantly, the presence of a non-persistent PCB congener in the blood of several people with camps at Northeast Cape indicates ongoing exposure. Elevated levels of the breakdown product of the pesticide DDT (DDE) were found in the people of Gambell, likely indicating that military uses in the past were a source of contamination.

Northeast Cape has always been an important place for subsistence fishing, hunting, and gathering of greens and berries. After the military contaminated the Northeast Cape area, people have been afraid to harvest subsistence foods. The military contamination at Gambell affects the land and waters of the village site that poses an immediate threat to human health.

The people of Saint Lawrence Island are concerned about health problems that may be associated with the military contamination, including cancers, diabetes, reproductive problems, thyroid disease, nervous and immune system disorders. These health problems were not apparent until after the military occupation.

The people of Saint Lawrence Island continually struggle to get accurate information from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers who fail to properly communicate with the people. The people also observe that the Corps of Engineers delay responsible site assessment and cleanup. The United States military has never apologized for their use and damage of the lands, waters, wildlife, and people of Saint Lawrence Island.

Item 07-Info

A. *Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy Agency Summary*

1. *Assigned Responsibilities*

"The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP), as a servant of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), develops, interprets, and monitors policies that encourage and challenge the church and society to reflect and act in faithful response to God's call to do justice."

So reads the newly approved Mission Statement of the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) as they met October 24–27, 2002, in El Paso, Texas. In every age, the Spirit calls on the church to discern afresh God's will for life in our particular time and place in history. The ACSWP's work is to discern what it means to proclaim and embody the Gospel in relation to contemporary society. In this work, the ACSWP and its task forces draw upon a great wealth of resources:

- the voices of the biblical text;
- the wisdom of theological discourse;
- the guidance of the Reformed confessions;
- the tradition of past policy statements;
- the insights of sociopolitical disciplines;
- the advice of members and all governing bodies of the Church;
- the insights of people who are poor, victims of existing policies, and those who have not had a voice in councils of the Church; and
- the counsel of ecumenical partners. (*Minutes*, 1993, Part I, p. 769)

Social witness can occur at many different points: in a church session, in a presbytery, in an advocacy group, in the participation of Christians in mission, in the challenge of a Christian community at home or in another country, in a meeting of the ecumenical church.

However, for Presbyterians, decisions about the church's social witness need to be made by persons elected to serve in governing bodies (session, presbytery, synod, and General Assembly). As governing bodies meet, the elected persons are commissioned ". . . not simply to reflect the will of the people, but rather to seek together to find and represent the will of Christ . . ." (*Book of Order*, G-4.0301d).

In providing service and resources to meet the growing needs of congregations, middle governing bodies, and General Assembly, the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) finds guidance in this their Mission Statement as they participate in service to the one mission of the Church under Jesus Christ. The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy engages with the grassroots in assisting the General Assembly to discern what it means to proclaim and embody the Gospel in relation to contemporary society.

Making a personal social witness begins with very individual and personal ways of growing and developing as a Christian—studying the Scriptures with prayerful discernment, deepening one's understanding of faithfulness through the church's social witness policy, connecting one's faith with others in the church community, and then expressing one's individual and collective faithfulness to the world beyond the church. The ACSWP is a partner and resource in this witness throughout the church.

The work of the churchwide Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy is based on a number of passages from the Scriptures, *The Book of Confessions*, and the *Book of Order*. The 1993 General Assembly policy statement *Why and How the Church Makes a Social Policy Witness* provides extensive documentation of these passages and is a useful document in local congregational interpretation of the ACSWP and its mission.

All of these passages, however, have a common theme. The Gospel says that to confess Jesus Christ as Lord is to believe that God can and has overcome the powers of sin in the world. Christians do not work alone, but join the Lord Jesus Christ who is already at work in our world. John Calvin said that social concern, expressed by action on behalf of our neighbors, is a central part of the faith. And, historic faith confessions, the work of theologians, and the actions of the General Assemblies have reaffirmed that message. Our faithfulness as Reformed Christians means action.

In support of the work of the assembly, the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy is given direct access to the assembly as it meets in annual session. Between sessions of the assembly, the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy also assists the General Assembly Council, the Office of the General Assembly, and other entities and agencies of the church as their work involves the development and interpretation of social witness policy.

The committee carries out its responsibilities in four major ways. They are the

1. development and recommendation of new social witness and policy for approval by the General Assembly;

2. interpretation and communication of the General Assembly's social witness and policy, both to the church and the world at large;

3. rendering of advice and counsel to the entities and governing bodies of the church on matters of social witness policy throughout the year; and

4. rendering of advice and counsel to the General Assembly when it meets as a governing body in annual session.

The committee develops and recommends new social witness and policies primarily in response to referrals from the General Assembly and its entities, and in a manner consistent with the *Manual of the General Assembly 2002–2003*, "On Forming Social Policy." This policy development requires depth of theological reflection, breadth of input, diversity of insight, and equity of participation in all policy development work. Before a policy statement is approved, extensive consultation is mandated at all stages of development. Thus, no work of the committee is independent of the concerns of Presbyterians gathered in worshiping and serving communities across the land.

The committee's Advice and Counsel group carries out the task of providing advice and counsel at the annual meeting of the General Assembly. This group of elected committee members, together with other staff and resource persons from several General Assembly Council entities, advises commissioners in assembly committees and other entities about social policies, which are applicable to issues before the assembly. It may also comment on the need or direction for future social policy. Advice and counsel is provided throughout the meeting, through "Advice and Counsel Memoranda," by oral testimony before assembly committees, and informally.

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy consists of twelve members, nine of whom are elected by the General Assembly from the whole church and three who are General Assembly Council members. Members are: Raymond Aldous Anglin, Plantation, Fla.; Jackie Cho, Bryn Mawr, Pa.; Ruy O. Costa (chair), Billerica, Mass.; Sue Dickson, El Paso, Tex.; Margaret Elliott, (vice-chair), Winston-Salem, N.C.; Nile Harper, Ann Arbor, Mich.; Dorothy J. Henderson, Joliet, Ill.; Josephine Lu, Huntington Beach, Calif.; Gwendolyn L. Martin, Apple Valley, Minn.; Jananne Sharpless, Sacramento, Calif.; Ronald H. Stone, Pittsburgh, Pa.; and Jack M. Terry, Portland, Oreg. Staffing for the committee includes Peter A. Sulyok, coordinator; Belinda M. Curry, associate; Bonnie Hoff, senior administrative assistant; and Marilynn LaFountain, senior administrative assistant.

2. *Accomplishments*

Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy members and staff make themselves available for interpretive events as requested and as time allows. The committee welcomes inquiries through its office in Louisville. All

governing bodies, churches, and members are encouraged to use the "Presbyterian Social Witness Policy Compilation," which contains the core of the assemblies' social policy statements since 1946. It is revised regularly to meet the needs of the church and is available in both print (policies through 2000) and on the Worldwide Web (www.pcusa.org/acswp), and can be ordered through Presbyterian Distribution Services (#68-600-2000-001).

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy meets three times each year: in the summer, following the General Assembly, to discern and prioritize its work; in late fall, to review progress on papers; and in January, to edit and approve final drafts for submission to the assembly. This year the committee has prepared five documents, including the annual *Human Rights Update,* for the Assembly's consideration:

- Policy Statement on Living Faithfully with Families in Transition;
- Resolution Calling for the Abolition of For-Profit Private Prisons;
- Resolution on Africa;
- Resolution on Israel and Palestine; and
- Human Rights Update 2002–2003.

The ACSWP continued to seek feedback on *Changing Families: A Churchwide Study Document*, released through its Task Force on Changing Families, and held, with the General Assembly Council, a synod consultation on "Living Faithfully with Families in Transition" in the fall as it sought further input from the church prior to submitting the policy statement to this assembly.

In the area of new social witness policy development, a task force on "Harvesting Seeds of Justice: Ministering in Church and Society with Persons Who Have Disabilities" was appointed and began its work. The committee approved for distribution to the presbyteries and congregations a "Prospectus for a Task Force on Comprehensive Serious Mental Illness." The committee maintains its concern for the development of two future new policy task forces related to earlier General Assembly referrals and calls for study: a Task Force on "End of Life Issues" and a Task Force on "Genetic Research and Development."

The committee appointed a Resolution Team on "Violence, Religion, and Terrorism" to study and report on terrorism, the relationship of religion to violence, U.S. military response, and U.S. political and economic involvement that may contribute to global problems. A vital part of the study will be the defining of terrorism, war, and political violence, for the General Assembly, and reviewing the applicability of the concepts of just peacemaking, just war, and nonviolent intervention in the context post September 11, 2001.

Two churchwide study documents on trade and globalization continue to be offered for study: "The Globalization of Life: Challenge to the Church" (PDS 68-600-01-002) and "The Employment Effects of Free Trade and Globalization" (PDS68-600-01-003). The church is invited to read, reflect, and offer feedback to the committee on these study documents to assist it in thinking through a future resolution. Two other documents are anticipated in 2003 as part of this study series. They will examine the environmental and cultural impact of trade and globalization.

The committee as a whole continued to immerse itself in immigration issues as it thinks through a process for a resolution. At its El Paso, Texas, meeting in October 2002 and at its Plantation, Florida, meeting in January 2003, the committee engaged in dialogue and saw firsthand immigration concerns and deepened its sense of the church and societies needs. Available to the church is the recently approved "Transformation of Churches and Society Through Encounter with New Neighbors." It is also available in Korean (PDS #68-600-01-004) and Spanish (PDS #68-600-01-005). These documents are also available on the Web (www.pcusa.org/acswp).

The committee assisted in the publication of three documents. The *Statement on Post-Viability and Late-Term Abortion* is available (PDS #68-600-02-005). Working with Health Ministries USA, the ACSWP jointly published the *Resolution on Advocacy on Behalf of the Uninsured* (PDS #68-600-02-004) with helpful appendices on how Presbyterians can become involved. Working with the Rural Ministry Network, the ACSWP jointly published *We*

Are What We Eat (PDS # 68-600-02-003) with a newly developed study guide for use by the church. These documents are also available on the Web (www.pcusa.org/acswp).

Each year, the committee submits a human rights update to the General Assembly, highlighting those areas of particular concern in our country and to our partner churches across the world. The Office of the General Assembly makes this document, the "Human Rights Update 2002–2003." which is more descriptive than prescriptive, available. Previous year updates are often helpful when a concern is not raised in the current year.

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy works collaboratively with the Ministries Divisions and other entities of the General Assembly Council, having liaison members from each Ministries Division and from the Advocacy Committees on Racial Ethnic Concerns and Women's Concerns. When possible, the committee spends time with church members and with relevant presbytery committees during its meetings.

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy periodically monitors issues concerning Taiwan, its independence and United Nations membership, and relations between the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan and the China Christian Council, together with the Worldwide Ministries Division.

The committee sponsors an annual gathering of the Theological Educators for Presbyterian Social Witness. The meeting in 2003 was held at the Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico in San Juan, Puerto Rico, March 19–23, 2003, where the seminary/university ethics professors were able to interact with the seminary and its San Juan context and continue work on their "resistance" book project in addition to reflection on the work of the ACSWP.

The committee held a "Blue Sky" retreat prior to its summer meeting in Ann Arbor, Michigan, where it examined new ways to more effectively do its work. As part of this process, at the fall meeting, the committee continued and deepened its reflection on how it can better interpret the denomination's social witness policies. The ACSWP Coordinating Committee held a first-time retreat in the fall to examine creatively the opportunities for the development of social witness policy, shorting the processes when appropriate, and to broaden the churches involvement at all stages of its development. In addition, they recommended to the committee a process for prioritizing emerging issues with existing work for use at its pending summer meeting. Interest in fund-raising emerged out of the "Blue Sky" retreat and the committee further examined opportunities for fund-raising at its winter meeting.

Other responses by the ACSWP to General Assembly work may be found in the responses to referrals.

B. *Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns Agency Summary*

The Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns (ACREC) continues its work of advocacy and monitoring on issues of concern to people of color. The committee is composed of twelve regular members, and one co-opted member, representing African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, Middle Eastern Americans, and European Americans. The current membership of the committee is as follows: Patricia Hew Lee, Asian Caucus, chairperson; Zaki L. Zaki, Middle Eastern Caucus, vice chairperson and liaison to the Advisory Committee On Social Witness Concerns (ACSWP); Judith Armour-Pingel, secretary, at-large Native American member; Fahed Abu-Akel, at-large Middle Eastern member and Moderator of the 214th General Assembly (2002); Curtis Jones, National Black Presbyterian Caucus, chair of the ACREC Task Force to Examine GA Entities; Ralph Scissons, Native American Consulting Committee, chair of the Study and Comment subcommittee; Evelyn Kelly, at-large member, African American member, chair of the ACREC Resource and Referral subcommittee and liaison to Mission Responsibility Through Investments (MRTI); Lemuel Garcia-Arroyo, Hispanic Caucus member; Radames "Rod" Rodriguez, at-large Hispanic member and liaison to the Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns (ACWC); Sung-Kook Shin, at-large Asian representative; John Spangler, at-large European American member; Vernon Carroll, Native American member from the General Assembly Council Executive Committee; and Kirk Perucca, co-opted European American member from Project Equality.

Liaisons to ACREC are: Abe Valenzuela, Hispanic liaison from the General Assembly Nominating Committee (GANC); Nile Harper, European American liaison from the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP); and R Ann (Ani) Lelea, Asian American liaison from the Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns (ACWC).

1. *Assigned Functions*

The functions of ACREC are twofold: advocacy and monitoring. Through advocacy, the committee continually evaluates shifting social trends in church and society, and provides advice and counsel to the General Assembly (GA) and General Assembly Council (GAC) in response to their requests or on its own initiative. The chairperson is a corresponding member of the General Assembly and the General Assembly Council. The committee addresses issues where race is a factor that negatively impacts the quality of life for people of color in such areas as civil rights, racial justice, environmental justice, economic justice, public education, law enforcement, health care, employment, and housing. The committee also monitors the implementation of programs and policies approved by the church that impact the quality of life for racial ethnic people in the church, the workplace, and the world. These responsibilities are fulfilled in consultation with other agencies, including the ACWC and the ACSWP. Specifically, the assigned functions that are stated in the *GAC Manual of Operations* are as follows:

a. Prepare policy statements, resolutions, recommendations, reports, and advice and counsel memoranda on racial ethnic concerns to the General Assembly at the request of the general Assembly, the General Assembly Council, or on its own initiative.

b. Advise the General Assembly Council on matters of racial ethnic concerns including statements concerning pressing issues, that the council may wish to consider between meetings of the General Assembly.

c. Provide advice and counsel to the general Assembly and its committees on overtures, commissioners= resolutions, reports, and actions before the General Assembly that impact issues of racial ethnic concern.

d. Assist the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy in maintaining an up-to-date and accurate compilation of General Assembly policy on racial ethnic concerns and provide information to the church as requested.

e. Provide the Stated clerk, the Moderator of the General Assembly, and the Executive Director of the General Assembly Council with information as they fulfill their responsibilities to communicate and interpret General Assembly policies on racial ethnic concerns.

f. Monitor the implementation of racial justice policies and programs relative to racial ethnic concerns.

g. Through advocacy maintain a strong prophetic witness to the church and for the church on existing and emerging issues of racial ethnic concern.

2. *Accomplishments and Concerns*

The ACREC is extremely grateful and elated that its own vice chair, Fahed Abu-Akel, was elected Moderator of the 214th General Assembly (2002).

Immediately prior to the convening of 214th General Assembly (2002), the ACREC provided a briefing session for commissioners to the General Assembly informing them of the implications of overtures for racial and ethnic members of the church. Representatives from ACREC addressed Advice and Counsel Memos (a/k/a A&Cs) written by ACREC singly or jointly with the Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns (ACWC) and/or the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP). At the 214th General Assembly (2002), all of the A&Cs written by ACREC were approved.

The ACREC held three regular meetings during the year 2002: a January meeting in Louisville; a May meeting in Washington, DC; and a July meeting in Los Angeles, California.

During the past year, ACREC was concerned that the General Assembly had contracted with the Adams Mark Hotel for accommodations during its 214th General Assembly (2002) in Columbus, Ohio, due to lawsuits having been lodged against the Adams Mark Hotels based on their racially discriminatory policies and practices toward racial minorities. Project Equality (of which ACREC's Kirk Perucca is president and CEO) was named by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to be the compliance officer in this case. However, after ACREC had expressed its displeasure to the Office of the General Assembly regarding use of the Adams Mark Hotels and asked for

recission of the contract for General Assembly accommodations, and prior to the convening of the 214th General Assembly (2002), the Adams Mark Hotel lawsuit was settled and dismissed. Thus, the issue of PC(USA)'s contract with the Adams Mark Hotel became moot.

In the aftermath of the "9-11" 2001 disaster, ACREC sent a letter to the GAC requesting that action be taken to add the moral voice of PC(USA) to those decrying the racial profiling of Middle Eastern persons, except in situations that threatened the security of the United States such as in airports. The rationale was that following that devastating event, there were numerous reported cases in the national media of Middle Eastern persons being stopped and arrested indiscriminately by police; being the targets of physical abuse and violence; and even being victims of murder. The ACREC is opposed to all types of discrimination, including racial profiling.

The committee is pleased to report that as a result of its meetings with and requests and recommendations to the GAC to increase racial ethnic hiring at PC(USA), in January 2002 Eleanor Doty, a racial ethnic person was hired at the Presbyterian Center to recruit and screen people of color for employment at PC(USA), especially for upper-level, exempt positions; Also, ACREC is proud of its successful advocacy to increase contracting for goods and services with minority vendors.

Also, as a result of ACREC's efforts for fuller implementation of the Minority Vendor Policy's goal, ACREC is informed that the Purchasing Department reached the minimum goal of 10 percent for minority contracting in 2001, which includes businesses that are 50 percent women-owned, as well as those 50 percent owned by persons of color. The ACREC is informed by the Purchasing Department that it expects to do the same when books are closed for 2002. It is ACREC's stated desire to the GAC that the minimum goal for minority contracting be increased to 15 percent.

The ACREC is pleased that its efforts have resulted in such positive actions directed toward achieving a more inclusive and diverse workforce; in providing economic opportunities for minority vendors; and in helping the church realize a fuller measure of success in its expressed commitment to equal employment opportunity and affirmative action. The mandatory requirement of participation in antiracism training as a condition of employment is a sterling example. It is ACREC's hope that such initiatives will continue to be implemented and strengthened at the Presbyterian Center; and that they will be implemented in all agencies with hiring and contracting authority throughout the church.

The ACREC continues to be an advocate for inclusiveness and diversity in accordance with *A Churchwide Plan for Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action* as well as the *Racial Ethnic/Immigrant Evangelism and Church Growth Strategy*. The committee continues to be concerned about the funding and implementation of both of these documents, and will continue to advocate for and to monitor the same.

The ACREC recommended to the GAC that the General Assembly Council, the Office of the General Assembly, Human Resources, and all other appropriate entities be required to include "Middle Easterners" in their assessment and evaluation reports as an officially recognized category for statistical reporting purposes, as are Caucasians, African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and Asians. The rationale for this was that the Middle Eastern Caucus is an established national caucus of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and that such fact indicates that the church recognizes and categorizes a group of American citizens with ancestry from a specific geographic location in the world as "Middle Eastern." Thus, ACREC felt that such category of persons should be recognized and counted for statistical purposes in all employment and vendor reports collected by the church.

The ACREC is pleased to report that the Presbyterian Center does now include a category for reporting the employment of Middle Eastern persons in its statistical analyses.

The ACREC's Task Force to Examine the Racial Justice Policies and Programs of the Board of Pensions (BOP), the Presbyterian Foundation (FDN), the Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program (PILP), and the Presbyterian Publishing Corporation (PPC) (a/k/a the GA Entities Task Force) in relation to the racial ethnic members of the PC(USA) is well under way and is expected to report its findings and make recommendations to the 216th General Assembly (2004). The task force consists of the following members: Curtis Jones, chair; Janet Ying; Fuad Bahnan; and Ralph Scissons; with Kirk Perucca serving as consultant and Alice Broadwater as staff.

An ACREC initiated Task Force to Study the Disenfranchisement of People of Color in the US Electoral System (a/k/a the Elections Task Force) was formed by the GAC in 2002. The task force was charged with determining whether the church should make a policy statement regarding the matter of election law violations and voting irregularities. The task force was asked to report its findings to the 216th General Assembly (2004). This task force is chaired by Jack Baugh, staffed by Helen Locklear, and consists of the following members: Evelyn Kelly, Eugene Teselle, Ralph Scissons, and Ernie Freund.

Another task force initiated by ACREC (a/k/a the Reparations Task Force) designed to study issues of reparations for African Americans, Native Americans, Alaskan Natives, Asian Americans, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and others who have experienced unjust treatment in the United States is in progress and scheduled to report its findings and recommendations to the 216th General Assembly (2004). This task force, staffed by Mark Koenig, consists of the following members: Mark Lomax, Alice Nishi, Luther Ivory, Lydia Hernandez, Ron Kernaghan, and Alice Paul.

The ACREC representatives to the 215th General Assembly (2003) are Patricia Hew Lee, chair; Zaki Labib Zaki, vice chair; Curtis Jones, General Assembly task force chair; Ralph Scissons, chair of ACREC's study and comment subcommittee; and Evelyn Kelly, chair of ACREC's resource and referral subcommittee.

The GAC Executive Committee voted September 2001to appoint a work group to review the structure of the advocacy committees (ACREC and ACWC) and to bring a progress report to the June 2002 Executive Committee meeting with a final report to the September 2002 Executive Committee meeting. The work group was charged with proposing a design whereby the GAC Executive Director has flexibility in the appointment and assignment of staff and lodgment of the advocacy committees rather than being restricted by the current wording of the GAC *Manual of Operations*. The ACREC representatives to the Work Group to Review the Structure of the Advocacy Committees are Judith Armour-Pingel, Zaki L. Zaki, and Curtis Jones. The work group met on January 13, 2003, in Louisville and adopted language that would permit the GAC's Executive Director, in consultation with each committee, to appoint staff for each committee; would lodge the staff of both advocacy committees in the GAC's Executive Director's Office, unless a committee consents to its staff being lodged outside that office; and would require that staff for each committee be accountable for the work of its assigned committee, to the GAC's Executive Director's Office.

The ACREC is concerned about the increase in police brutality being perpetrated upon people of color in the United States; the proliferation of for-profit private prisons throughout the country that house a disproportionate number of inmates of color; the adverse impact of sentencing affecting criminals of color; the rise in hate crimes directed at people of color; the warmongering posture of the United States directed toward countries around the world containing large populations of people of color such as Iraq and Afghanistan; and the church's silence on issues of genocide being perpetrated by the U.S. government upon peoples of color both at home and around the world through (among other things) germ warfare, and failure to provide adequate treatment for known conditions such as drug addiction, mental illness, malnutrition, and HIV/AIDS.

Item 07-01

Full Text Rationale for "Resolution Calling for the Abolition of For-Profit Private Prisons"

This resolution is in response to the following referral: *Overture 99-35. On Opposing the Privatization of Prisons—From the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta, Item 3.* (*Minutes*, 1999, Part I, pp. 81, 620).

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A. *Context and History: Biblical and Theological*

At the beginning of his ministry Jesus announced that: "The right time has come and the kingdom of God is near" (Mark 1:15, TEV). Near the end of his ministry he called on his followers to "Love your neighbor as you love yourself" and put no limits on who one's neighbor is. In Luke's gospel Jesus voiced his concern for those who are incarcerated by reading Isaiah 61:1 in the synagogue one Sabbath and declared that "This passage has come true today, as you heard it being read" (Luke 4:21, TEV). The text that he read included the statement: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me… He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives" (Luke 4:18, TEV). In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus rejected vengeance as the primary goal of the justice system and abolished the law of an "eye for an eye." "You have heard that it was said, 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But now I tell you: do not take revenge on someone who wrongs you" (Matt. 5:38–39, TEV). In Matthew 25:31–46 he challenged his followers to visit those in prison. "I was sick and you took care of me, in prison and you visited me … I tell you, whenever you did this for one of the least important of these followers of mine, you did it for me" (Matt. 25:36, 40; TEV). He gave specific instructions regarding our responsibility to visit prisoners and to be concerned for their welfare.

Jesus announced that the "kingdom of God was near." This kingdom would mean a transformation of all of life. Jesus himself was arrested at night, tried and convicted a short time later of blasphemy, and handed over in chains early the next morning to Pontius Pilate. The charge against him was changed from blasphemy to the King of the Jews, a political accusation on which Pilate based his decision to have Jesus crucified. Clearly his arrest, conviction and sentencing were products of a corrupt justice system. We believe that we as Christians are called to care for individual prisoners by personal contacts, but that we are also called to examine and to change the current system of for-profit private prisons as part of our responsibility to love our neighbor.

We affirm that those who are behind prison walls are persons who have been created in God's image and are fellow children of God. They are neighbors for whom Christ died and whom we are called to love. We are all

sinners in need of forgiveness and a Savior. As we gratefully experience the grace and forgiveness of God in our own lives, we are convinced that no person is beyond the reach of God's redeeming love in Christ.

The ultimate goal of incarceration should NOT be vengeance, retribution, or punishment for punishment's sake. In Matthew 5:38, Jesus refutes the idea of vengeance for Christians and overturns the law of "an eye for an eye." Not only Scripture but also experiences have shown that a vengeful justice system is counterproductive. Such a system intensifies antisocial attitudes and behavior on the part not only of those who are imprisoned but also of all of us who participate in that process. Such a dynamic increases rather than diminishes threats to the peace and order of society. It supports those elected and appointed officials who argue for expanded spending on additional police, judges, courts, prisons, and correctional officers, rather than on such human and social needs as mediation, education, day care, child and maternal health, substance abuse counseling, and job training.

We are called to understand the present context in which our justice system is functioning. Christ calls us to address situations such as homelessness, joblessness, the welfare system, and poverty in order to "love our neighbors" and care for the whole community. Christ also calls us to partnership with all faith communities and even secular agencies to combat the unhealthy situations that lead to imprisonment, as well as to minister to those in prison. Through these partnerships, we pray that we can develop a society that moves toward both the Old Testament vision of Shalom and Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom of God. Our vision is of a society where there is education and health care for all, drug treatment for all who require it, jobs for all who need them, and a sense of belonging to a community. With this vision of community, we can begin to develop a criminal justice system that is truly just.

We reaffirm the 1910 and 1915 statements of prior General Assemblies, for we believe that Christ calls us to care for our neighbors who are in prison and never to abandon them. We affirm our solidarity with our sisters and brothers, fellow children of God, who are behind prison walls. For we have all been created in God's image, but we have all fallen short of the glory of God. We are all sinners in need of a Savior. We can all be counted among those for whom Christ has died.

As we gratefully receive God's grace in our own lives, we proclaim our understanding that no person is beyond the reach of God's redeeming love in Christ. Further, we acknowledge that Jesus has called us to minister to each other in his name. We are to be concerned for all the oppressed and marginalized in our society. As followers of Christ who understand ourselves to be fellow sinners, we recognize our responsibility for the care, custody, and rehabilitation of those incarcerated.

B. *Analysis I: Arguments in Favor of For-Profit Private Prisons*

Why did the for-profit private prison industry, which had been driven completely out of business by the 1920s through a combination of faith community, citizen, and government action, spring to life again fifty years later? Part of the reason lies in the political context of the 1980s, particularly arguments about the appropriate roles of government (the public sector) and corporations (the private sector) in a democratic, capitalist economy and society. These dynamics not only helped for-profit private prisons re-emerge, but also created at least some of the arguments and rationalizations being used by the private prison industry to justify themselves.

The basic question can be summarized as follows: In a democratic society, which functions should only and ever be appropriately exercised by the public sector? Which functions should only and ever be appropriately exercised by the private sector? Which functions could appropriately be either public, private or a mix of the two?

These questions are quite legitimate and form the basis for much political discussion that has taken place in our country since the American Revolution and the Federalist Papers. In the 1980s, these discussions were for the most part reinitiated by a handful of conservative think tanks in Margaret Thatcher's England and Ronald Reagan's United States. Government, the public sector, they argued, had grown too powerful. It was restraining trade, impeding the free flow of markets, stifling initiative, and choking off growth. Furthermore, they argued, government was fundamentally unaccountable, answering only to itself.

Their answer was to have as little government as possible, so as to release what they saw as the energy, efficiency, creativity, and accountability of the private sector. They were for the radical downsizing of government, with as many public assets and services as possible being transferred to the private sector. This phenomenon became known as "privatization."

Without the overall emphasis on privatization during the 1980s, it is highly questionable whether the for-profit private prison corporations could have made a successful startup at that time. But the political climate was exactly right for what they proposed and created the context for the arguments they and their allies would make in support of this development.

The first argument they made in favor of for-profit private prisons is that government has an "unfair monopoly" on prisons, jails, and detention centers, which effectively prevents any institution other than government from owning and operating them. This domination of an entire industry, they continued, was unfair to and discriminated against business. Take down these barriers, they said, so that any corporation or individual who wanted to had the right and opportunity to own and/or operate their own prison. Only in this way, they argued, could the free market be served. Boiled down to its essence, this argument said, "If you won't let us own and operate for-profit private prisons, you don't believe in the free market."

Their second argument in favor of for-profit private prisons built from the first argument. The public sector, they argued, is inherently inefficient and unaccountable. Unlike corporations, government has no competition that forces it to remain "lean and mean," in a favorite phrase of the times. According to this argument, the public sector has no incentive to manage wisely, to implement modern management techniques, to cut costs ruthlessly, to downsize, to improve profit margins. While government is theoretically accountable to "the people," they saw it in practice as a permanent bureaucracy, answerable only to itself. Corporations, on the other hand, because they are accountable to their shareholders, supposedly have no choice except to manage in the most responsible and efficient manner possible, which means that they will do the job as cheaply as it can be done. Boiled down, this argument ran, "We can do it so much more cheaply that we can turn a large profit and still save the taxpayers money."

Over time, as it became clear that for-profit private prisons did not in fact save money for the taxpayer, and as mega-scale corporate scandals undermined the argument that market forces ensure efficiency and accountability, a third argument emerged: "We can do it better." Here the for-profit private prison corporations argued that the public sector was so tied to past practices that it could not possibly innovate or create. "Let us apply modern techniques to the problems of prison management," they said. "We'll take on the tough issues of job training, drug rehabilitation, juvenile crime, re-entry into the community, and we'll do a better job than government."

The final major argument made in favor of for-profit private prisons was grounded in the complex politics related to crime and prisoners in the period beginning around 1980 and for the most part continuing through the present time. The public was (and still is) convinced that this country is in the midst of an unprecedented crime wave (even when statistics show crime falling substantially) and demanded that their elected leaders be "tough on crime," which in part meant building more prisons. At the same time, they were generally unwilling to vote for any bond issues that could involve higher taxes. So elected officials and those running for office were between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand, they wanted (or at least felt they needed) to build more prisons. On the other, they didn't have the public funds to do it and didn't want to risk their political careers by going to a referendum on a ballot measure that involved a potential tax increase.

This was a situation tailor-made for the for-profit private prison corporations, with their access to private capital, through such investment banks as Lehman Brothers. By contracting with these corporations, elected officials could say, "During my term in office, we built four new prisons without raising taxes—and it didn't cost the taxpayer a dime." Of course, it was still taxpayers' money that paid for both the construction of these prisons and their operating costs. But because funds were taken from operating rather than capital budgets, it was easier to make this claim. Taxpayers were rarely made aware of the additional long-term costs of financing prisons by in effect putting them on a private credit card underwritten by investment banks rather than through lower-cost public bond issues, since neither public officials nor the for-profit private prison industry had a self-interest in

advertising the financial impact of this method. This argument by the for-profit private prison corporations to elected officials, while never made publicly, really boiled down to, "We can help you stay in office."

C. *Analysis II: The Arguments Against For-Profit Private Prisons*

This section represents one of two that deal with the arguments against for-profit private prisons. This first section responds specifically to the arguments in favor of for-profit private prisons that were summarized in the preceding section. The section that follows this one titled "The Presbyterian Church and For-Profit Private Prisons" looks at the for-profit private prison industry from the point of view of Presbyterian policy and teaching.

Let us take the four arguments in favor of for-profit private prisons in the order in which they were just presented. The first argument is basically that having the public sector own and operate all prisons, jails, and detention centers is an unfair monopoly and therefore anti-democratic.

While this argument may on the surface seem almost comic to some, free market ideology carried to its extreme, it is in fact the most central and critical, particularly for any person or institution operating from a faith perspective. Underlying this argument is a fundamental question for any society that aspires to be free and democratic: Are there any functions of society that should under no circumstances be operated for a profit?

This is a fundamental moral and ethical question. Before beginning to answer it, let us pose another hypothetical one. Would it be appropriate for a for-profit private corporation to operate this nation's court system? As with prisons, some of the functions of these institutions are already contracted out to for-profit private corporations: maintenance, janitorial services, and construction. Some courts already meet in facilities that are rented or leased from private corporations and individuals. Wouldn't judges be more accountable if they were hired, supervised, and evaluated by a sophisticated corporate personnel office, rather than being appointed or elected? Why not take the next logical step and let the private sector bring its management and entrepreneurial skills to our court system, so that those responsible for administering that system can concentrate their full energies on the search for justice?

One of the consistent themes in Christ's teachings, paraphrased, is that there are some things that must never be bought and sold in the marketplace. We believe that among these are the powers to

- take away another human being's freedom;
- separate them from other human beings;
- prevent them from communicating in any way with others; and
- use of physical force against them, up to and including deadly force.

These are among the powers that are vested in those who operate prisons, whether private or public. Imprisonment itself, segregation, solitary confinement, withholding of food, "cell extractions"—these are excruciatingly serious and solemn acts, to be undertaken only with the utmost deliberation and with the most careful and prayerful judgment. Whatever stands in the way of impartial judgment cannot be countenanced.

For example: A major factor in the decision as to whether to release someone from prison is the reports on their behavior filed by the correctional employees who work with them. In at least one of the major for-profit private prison corporations, correctional employees receive stock in the corporation as their pension plan. It is therefore in those employees' self-interest to make sure that the for-profit private prison corporation is as profitable as possible. If the corporation is having trouble filling its "beds" (a common situation in the for-profit private prison industry), that employee is in a serious conflict of interest position when being asked whether or not a prisoner should be paroled. While we hope and expect that many if not most correctional employees would act honorably under these circumstances, the very dynamic places them as well as the prisoner in an intolerable situation.

This is perhaps the most basic reason why for-profit private prisons must be abolished. Decisions about the treatment of prisoners cannot run the risk of corruption by considerations of what will make the most profit for the corporation, its shareholders, and its employees. The question of whether human beings should be incarcerated for profit cannot be answered by an increased bottom line. In a humane society, in a democratic society, there are some things that can never be for sale, even and especially when they involve "one of the least of these followers of mine." Even if for-profit private prisons could achieve significant cost savings to the taxpayer, they would still be ethically unacceptable.

As it happens, for-profit private prisons do not save the taxpayers money. Studies have shown that, at best, they cost approximately the same as public prisons. In the face of these analyses, including a major study by the federal government's General Accounting Office, even the for-profit private prison corporations themselves have generally stopped making the argument about cost-effectiveness (U.S. General Accounting Office, *Private and Public Prisons: Studies Comparing Operational Costs and/or Quality of Service*, Reference GAO/GGD-96-198, 1996, Gaithersburg, Maryland; Abt Associates, Inc., *Private Prisons in the United States: An Assessment of Current Practice*, October 1998).

There is more to this issue than meets the eye, however. Cost-comparison studies of public and private prisons fail to take into account the hidden costs of the latter. For example, a 2001 study by Good Jobs First showed that more than one billion dollars in hidden public subsidies have gone to the for-profit private prison industry. When these costs to the taxpayer are taken into account, the true cost of for-profit private prisons is significantly more than that of prisons operated by the public sector.

What for-profit private prisons actually do is not to save funds but to redistribute how existing funds are allocated within the prison system. In order to pay the salaries and benefits of corporate executives, who make much more than public corrections managers at every level, and to achieve significant earnings for shareholders (who of course also include these same executives), they need to find other places to cut costs.

This speaks to the third argument in favor of for-profit private prisons, that they can "do it better." To be sure, there are industries where modern management techniques can save money without cutting services, but prisons are not one of them. In order to cut costs internally, for-profit private prison corporations must do the following:

- Cut services to prisoners. Studies of for-profit private prisons have documented reductions in food, medical and rehabilitation services, job training, and other resources available to prisoners (Allison Campbell, Andrew Coyle & Rodney Neufeld, *Capitalist Punishment: Prison Privatization and Human Rights*, Clarity Press, Atlanta, February 2003; Private Prison Report International www.psiru.org/justice>).

- Cut employee wages and benefits. This has resulted in less qualified and trained correctional employees, as well as remarkably high turnover rates. The result is diminished safety and security for both prisoners and correctional employees, including higher incidents of violence in all directions.

- Cut the number of employees. In the case of correctional officers, this is done by relying more on electronic surveillance (one of the "modern management techniques" that's applied to prisons) and on "lockdowns." By keeping prisoners in their cells for long periods of time each day, by restricting interaction with other prisoners through such activities as recreation, for-profit private prison corporations reduce their need for correctional staff—but at what price and to whom?

The final argument in favor of for-profit private prisons, one made privately and sometimes obliquely to public officials, is actually an argument against them as far as the general public is concerned. Because the for-profit private prison corporations are dependent on policy—that is, decisions made by elected and appointed officials—they need to find ways to argue for and to determine that policy. Often that argument is couched in the form of a campaign contribution written to a key elected official, or to someone hoping to be elected. A 2002 study by the National Institute on Money and State Politics found that, in the 2000 election cycle, the for-profit private prison industry made more than a million dollars in campaign contributions in fourteen southern states alone. Often the candidates they are backing financially are supporters not only of for-profit private prisons, but

also of other regressive criminal justice policies, including harsher sentencing laws. In this way, the for-profit private prisons exercise a corrupting influence on debates around criminal justice policy. They may help a set of candidates get elected, but in doing so they make it harder for the rest of us to move towards a more humane and just set of policies around issues of criminal justice and prisons.

The myth of prison privatization is that the government identifies a need for a certain number of prison beds and then searches on the open market for the company that will give the best possible service at the lowest possible price. The truth, unfortunately, is just the opposite. For-profit private prison companies don't care if their services are "needed" so long as they can find someone willing to pay. And they certainly aren't interested in competitive bidding, because competition drives prices and profits down.

Cornell Corrections' bid to build and operate a juvenile facility in Navassa, North Carolina, is a case in point. The initiative to build the facility came not from the state's Office of Juvenile Justice, but from State Representative David Redwine, who represents the county where the facility was to be located. About a dozen firms expressed interest in this possibility for profit. But after they looked at the requirements and the bizarre way the company would be chosen—Brunswick County Representative David Redwine and other legislators would play a role—they apparently got the picture. They decided not to waste their time and money bidding on a contract that obviously was headed for somebody else. As an editorial in the *Wilmington Star* explains: "Legislators for Brunswick and New Hanover counties greased the skids for that company, and after a brief, doomed attempt to solicit other proposals, the state is left with only one bidder: the one our Honorables wanted in the first place."

In most respects, this story is like every other story of influence peddling, with one major exception. While most pork-barrel projects waste dollars, the Cornell facility would also have wasted children's lives. As the *Wilmington Star* observes, "Whether this is the smartest way for the state to try rehabilitating young offenders is entirely beside the point. Many people think it isn't … [but] unless something unexpected happens, Cornell Corrections will get its chance to make money penning up punks in Navassa."

Fortunately, something did happen. Rural folks from Brunswick linked up with urban youth and advocates from Wilmington and Raleigh-Durham, and started making noise. At the same time, an overconfident Cornell jacked up its bid for running the facility, and the project was shelved, at least for the moment.

Grassroots groups have also made Cornell a two-time loser in Alaska, but the company has not given up on finding a way to turn its substantial political capital into a prison contract. In 1998, Cornell Corrections acquired Allvest Inc., an operator of pre-release halfway houses, in order to develop Alaska's first private prison in the Delta Junction. Cornell convinced the city to give the company a sole-source (noncompetitive) contract, but "after elections had changed the makeup of the Delta Junction City Council, the city rescinded the contract that would have made Allvest the recipient of the prison without competitive bids." Cornell then sued Delta Junction for breach of contract ("Prison's profitability brought into question." Associated Press, February 5, 2001).

With the Delta Junction project tied up in lawsuits, Cornell tried instead to get the project sited on Kenai Peninsula. There, Cornell managed to win over the city council, but couldn't overcome opposition from Kenai residents, who voted down the project by a resounding 3–1 margin, even after Cornell and their allies sank over $300,000 into the campaign.

Despite two major fiascoes, Cornell hasn't given up hope for their private prison in Alaska, which the company estimates could be worth $600 million over the next twenty years. To reinforce this effort, they are making strategic use of campaign contributions. In 1998, Cornell funneled more money to Alaska Governor Tony Knowles ($6,375) than to any other politician in the country. That year, Alaska was the second largest recipient of private prison funds after California (*Anchorage Daily News*, February 30, 2001).

Between 1990 and 1998, Allvest (now Cornell) contributed nearly $120,000 to state political campaigns, including $5,100 in 1996 and 1998 given to Eldon Mulder, House Finance co-chair and author of the legislation authorizing a prison in Delta Junction (*The Prison Payoff* , November 2000). In addition to political contributions,

Cornell lobbyist Joe Hayes paid Eldon Mulder's wife $85,000 to work as his office manager (*Peninsula Clarion* , September 23, 2001).

Cornell is so well connected that one of their executives was appointed to chair a subcommittee charged with "advising" the state on prison privatization. When that created too much of a conflict, he was replaced by a former Cornell executive (*Anchorage Daily News*, February 28, 2000).

Alaska and North Carolina are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to buying political influence. According to data compiled by the National Center on Money in State Politics, in 1998 alone, the Big Three private prison companies funneled 645 contributions to 361 candidates in 25 states for a total of more than $540,000, a significant sum in terms of state elections. Cornell Corrections gave $110,575—more than 20 percent —of the total even though at the time the company had just 6 percent of the market in adult prison beds.

Alaska is also the tip of the iceberg when it comes to dubious deals. For instance, the former mayor of Richmond, Leonidas Young, was indicted on multiple counts of racketeering, fraud, and money laundering for a number of schemes, including one in which Young and his associates were paid $44,500 to help Cornell win a contract for a city jail (U.S. District Court-Eastern District of Virginia, September 1998).

Finally, Alaska isn't the only state where Cornell has sued after the company's political scheme fell apart. Cornell also sued the state of Utah after the Department of Corrections abandoned plans for a private prison in Tooele County, forcing the state into a $1.5 million settlement. A grassroots coalition convinced the state that the space was not needed.

The nature of the for-profit private prison industry also leads to conflicts of interest and raises fundamental questions about how decisions regarding criminal justice and prison policy are made. In order to prosper, prison operators need to maintain a steady flow of prisoners and prison dollars. One of the industry's tools for accomplishing this is the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), a powerful right-wing lobby group that helps corporations draft and enact "model" legislation.

Industry leaders Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) and Wackenhut have paid tens (if not hundreds) of thousands of dollars in exchange for a privileged position on ALEC's Criminal Justice Task Force, which CCA chairs. The ALEC, in turn, not only promotes privatization, but also claims credit for having helped enact "Truth In Sentencing" and "Three Strikes" laws in twenty-five states (American RadioWorks story on ALEC (http://www.americanradioworks.org/features/corrections/laws1.html>.) Also see ALECWatch.org for a full report http://www.alecwatch.org. Western Prison Project report on ALEC and state campaign contributions in the West <http://www.westernprisonproject.org/publications.html>.

In addition to investing heavily in groups like ALEC, the for-profit private prison industry spends millions on campaign contributions (Brigette Sarabi and Edwin Bender, *The Prison Payoff: The Role of Politics & Private Prisons in the Incarceration Boom*, Western States Center and Western Prison Project, Portland, November 2000; Edwin Bender, *A Contributing Influence: The Private-Prison Industry and Political Giving in the South*, The Institute on Money in State Politics, Helena, Montana, 2002). While the industry initially focused on building influence at the state level, their growing dependence on Federal contracts has led them to prioritize getting leverage at the Federal level. Between 1995 and 2000, the Big Three contributed more than $528,000 to Federal campaigns, according to the Center For Responsive Politics (*Wall Street Journal*, November 6, 2001).

But the industry's campaign contributions and political connections also pay off at the state level. In 1998, the industry spent $540,000 on state elections, where a little money goes a long way. The industry's lobbying, campaign contributions and political connections pay off. Cornell convinced the North Carolina legislature to appropriate $2.5 million for a youth jail the Deptartment of Juvenile Justice never requested. In Mississippi, Wackenhut persuaded the state to pay millions for empty private beds while schools were in a funding crisis (National Institute on Money in State Politics on the campaign contributions in the southeast <http://www.followthemoney.org/press/prisons.phtml>).

Some other examples:

- When Corrections Corporation of America made an audacious bid to take over management of the entire Tennessee state prison system, the company had the good sense to hire the wife of the house speaker as their chief lobbyist. The company failed to take over the system, but won a number of contracts.

- Wackenhut Corrections went a step further in New Mexico by putting Manny Aragon, then president pro tem of the State Senate, on the company's payroll. Aragon denied that his new job created any conflict of interest even as he reversed his longstanding opposition to prison privatization. As a result, New Mexico became the state with the highest percentage of its prison population in private facilities.

- In the late '90s, the industry managed to get a provision inserted in an omnibus budget bill requiring half of all prisoners from the District of Columbia to be placed in private prisons. The provision was enacted with no studies, no hearings, no discussion, and so quietly that even D.C. shadow Senator Eleanor Holmes Norton didn't know about it until well after it had been passed.

- CCA's recently departed Chief Operating Officer, Michael Quinlan, served as director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons (FBOP) under former President Bush. Wackenhut board member Norman Carlson directed the agency under Ronald Reagan.

Finally, the industry fuels prison expansion by substituting private capital for public debt, effectively circumventing bond referenda and other processes designed to give voters a say in where their money goes.

D. *Analysis III: The Presbyterian Church and For-Profit Private Prisons*

In the preceding section, we summarized the arguments that have been made in favor of for-profit private prisons and then the counterarguments against these positions. In fact, far more arguments have been made against for-profit private prisons than in favor of them. For the Presbyterian church, many of these arguments are rooted in church policy, practice, and teaching. It is very clear that existing policy regarding the church's beliefs on incarceration contradict the profit-driven incentives of the for-profit private prison industry. This section summarizes the relevant elements of church teaching and then sets out how this relates to the debate over for-profit private prisons.

1. The PC(USA) has called for the use of incarceration as a last resort.

The 118th General Assembly (1978) of the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS) in a statement on *The Church and Criminal Justice* reflected on the belief that "restraint may be necessary to limit or prevent behavior that is dangerous to others" (*Minutes*, PCUS, 1978, Part I, p. 199). Yet it noted that the ultimate objective of the criminal justice system should be "one of reconciliation rather than one of retribution" (*Minutes*, PCUS, 1978, Part I, p. 202), including punitive measures taken against prisoners. It also held that "imprisonment should not be used as the principle means to achieve community protection and well being" (*Minutes*, PCUS, 1978, Part I, p. 202). Instead, this statement called for a "broad range of alternatives for restoring accused and convicted persons to community" (*Minutes*, PCUS, 1978, Part I, p. 202). Such calls for alternative methods of dealing with crime were reaffirmed by the 121st General Assembly (1981) of the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS) where such methods were seen as "more productive of meaningful change in the individual and more likely to bring about a reduction in the crime rate" (*Minutes*, PCUS, 1981, Part I, p. 111).

In an action taken on *Overture 5-84. On Studying Alternatives To Incarceration And Advocating The Development And Implementation of Such Alternatives—From the Synod of Piedmont*, the 196th General Assembly (1984) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) also noted the need for working for changes in the system that would allow for the "maximum use of all available alternatives to incarceration" (*Minutes*, 1984, Part I, pp. 55, 621), specifically noting that the legal definitions of some offenses need to be reclassified so that "treatment rather than incarceration" (*Minutes*, 1984, Part I, pp. 55, 621) would become the response of a caring, compassionate society.

All of these responses support an action taken by the 184th General Assembly (1972) of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (UPCUSA) in a report on Justice and the Imprisoned Statement. That assembly stated "the reduction of reliance on incarceration must be accomplished as soon as possible" (*Minutes*, UPCUSA, 1972, Part I, p. 430). The rationale behind this request was that "no substantive social objectives are served by the involuntary confinement of individuals." On the contrary, prisons contribute more to the perpetuation of crime than to its correction. There is massive evidence that "prison and jail life are seriously destructive of the health of human personality" (*Minutes*, UPCUSA, 1972, Part I, p. 430).

The for-profit private prison industry, however, must rely on incarceration not as a last resort, but as the preferred one, if it is to remain viable. For this industry, recidivism is not a failure, but an opportunity for repeat business. The existence and fiscal health of the entire industry rests upon incarcerating as many people as possible for the maximum feasible amount of time.

For this reason, the industry's goals completely contradict the stated aims of the church. For the for-profit private prison industry, rehabilitation and restoration to community for the incarcerated are not moral mandates but a threat to the industry's continuing success. Therefore, to promote their own interests, those involved in the business of prison privatization provide financial support and leadership for organizations that lobby for longer prison terms rather than alternative sentences, for mandatory terms for victimless crimes. They contribute heavily to campaigns of candidates for public office who favor incarceration and support prison privatization as a way to save the taxpayers money. This strategy allows for the continuation of the industry but does a great disservice to those who are now incarcerated or who will become so when alternative sentencing may have proved more beneficial. These women and men are abandoned to a system that now sees them as commodities, something to be used as a means to make more profit.

2. The PC(USA) has called upon the church to protect the health, safety and legal rights of offenders.

In a statement on *The Church and Criminal Justice*, the 118th General Assembly (1978) of the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS) stated that "human justice which reflects God's loving justice and just love will be especially concerned to guarantee, maintain, and defend the rights of those in our society who are socially, politically, and spiritually the weakest, most vulnerable, most likely to be forgotten or exploited and oppressed, most unable to help and defend themselves" (*Minutes*, PCUS, 1978, Part I, p. 199). It has been well-established that in the prison populations in our country, the poor, the mentally ill, and people of color are all over-represented. Once these individuals enter the criminal justice system, they are even more vulnerable. As a society, we have placed them in this position and are required to be responsible for their welfare while they are there. Their health and well-being are (or at least should be) under our control.

In placing such individuals under the control of those who wish to profit from their incarceration, we pay someone to take on the responsibility for us. Here the goals of the for-profit private prison corporations and the stated goals of the church again stand in conflict. For those who are paid to carry out society's responsibility to the incarcerated have another and conflicting mandate, to control costs. This puts them at odds with expending resources to ensure that the health, safety, and legal rights of prisoners are protected.

There is ample evidence to support this contention. There is higher number of violent incidents in for-profit private prisons, due to lack of sufficient correctional officer training, a high turnover rate due to low pay, and a higher number of prisoners per officer. All these measures save money for the corporation but do not focus on offender safety. A 1997 survey by criminologist James Austin shows that rates of violence are 49 to 65 percent higher in private than in public prisons. A 1999 study by researcher Judith Greene, the most comprehensive to date, demonstrates that Corrections Corporation of America (CCA)'s model Prairie Correctional Center had problems across most areas of operation when measured against comparable public prisons.

In such a setting, it is even difficult to monitor offender status at all, due to a lack of accountability on behalf of the for-profit private prison corporations to any but their own stockholders, the distance between offenders and their friends and families due to the interstate traffic in private prisoners and the lack of local monitoring of the prison environment. For-profit private prisons, claiming the rights of private property, have denied access to public officials ranging from sheriffs to health inspectors.

There are numerous examples of the levels of violence, particularly violence against women and juveniles, that are the result of this dynamic. These violations are not particular to any one of the major for-profit private prison corporations, but are endemic to all of them. Following are documented examples from the three largest U.S. based for-profit private prison corporations: Corrections Corporation of America, Wackenhut Corrections and Cornell Corrections:

a. *Corrections Corporation of America (CCA)*

Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), which received its first contract in 1985 from the Immigration and Naturalization Service, is the world's largest and most notorious private prison company. The following are two examples of "business as usual" at CCA:

- William P., a fifteen-year-old boy had to be hospitalized in a state psychiatric ward for an entire year after spending six months at the CCA Training School in Columbia, South Carolina. A lawsuit filed against the company described a pattern of abusive treatment, including hogtying William and locking him in a cell with larger, older males known for victimizing youth as a form of "punishment." The jury awarded the family $3 million, citing a pattern of criminal misconduct by the company. (More information: [2-2-1-1 CCA PP Metroland 5-15-00]. PDF of verdict: <http://www.afscme.org/private/prisons/suit-sc.pdf>)

- Salah Dafali, an asylum-seeker, was detained in a CCA's Elizabeth, New Jersey, detention center. Dafali was beaten by guards for participating in a nonviolent protest and sent to a local hospital where doctors found boot-print marks on his face. (More information: [http://www.psiru.org/justice/ppriarchive/ppri29-04-99.htm] Bergen Record coverage [http://199.173.2.7/news/caguard199904193.htm]).

b. *Wackenhut Corrections*

Wackenhut, the second largest for-profit private prison corporation in the United States, has a record of abuse to rival CCA. Some examples:

- Sara Lowe was fourteen years old when she was arrested and remanded to Wackenhut's Juvenile Justice Center in Coke County, Texas. While the company promised that Sara would get intensive counseling and education, her family later discovered that she had been raped almost nightly by one of the guards. Sara's family filed a suit against Wackenhut that was joined by eleven other girls who had been sexually abused at Coke County. Sara eventually committed suicide, on the same day the company agreed to settle the lawsuit without publicly accepting responsibility. (More information can be found at the following Web address: [http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2000/05/09/60II/main193636.shtml]).

- On March 30, 2000, the U.S. Justice Department sued the state of Louisiana and Wackenhut Corrections, alleging that juveniles at the company's Jena Juvenile Justice Center were being "subjected to excessive abuse and neglect." A juvenile court judge observed that youth sent to the facility "wound up in a place that drives and treats juveniles as if they walked on all fours. These young people deserve to be treated like human beings, not animals." Even after the state took over control of the facility, a district court judge was forced to issue an order forbidding retaliation against juveniles who were cooperating with the investigation after youth reported being threatened by Wackenhut employees. (More information can be found at the following Web addresses: [http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,3604,178467,00.html]. Justice Department lawsuit: [http://www.usdoj.gov/opa/pr/2000/March/155cr.htm].)

c. *Cornell Corrections*

Between 1999 and 2001, Cornell Corrections was contracted to operate the Santa Fe County Detention Center. Cornell's tenure at the jail was a fiasco: from sexual misconduct to inadequate medical care to over billing, Santa Fe became a textbook case for the failure of prison privatization. The following are some of the lowlights.

- There were multiple accounts of sexual violence and misconduct by guards at the Santa Fe County jail, most of which are detailed in a July 18, 2001, story by *The New Mexican*.

- Cornell guard, Marcos Cordova, was indicted on five counts of criminal sexual penetration for having intercourse with a female prisoner in December 2000 and February 2001.

- Cordova wasn't the only jail employee to end up on the wrong side of the bars. On April 16, 1999, a Cornell guard was arrested for forcing a male prisoner to give him oral sex. On March 6, 2001, the paper reported that another guard was arrested for beating a prisoner and sending him to the hospital.

- Cornell guard, Marcus Trujillo, who resigned in March 2001, was accused of sexual misconduct by four women who say they were assaulted by Trujillo on multiple occasions. Prisoner Mary Lucinda Valdez reported one incident to management, but Trujillo continued working in the women's unit. Valdez also reports being raped by another guard. "Trujillo and other guards 'sexually harassed' her and 'assaulted and fondled and repeatedly coerced (her) into having sexual relations." Three more women—Carmen Jaramillo, Michelle Montano, and Bertha Martinez—announced plans to sue the jail for allowing men into their cells in violation of state law.

Allegations of sexual assault by Cornell employees were not limited to the Santa Fe jail. A forty-one-year-old guard at Cornell's Airport Road juvenile facility (also in Santa Fe) was fired after a fifteen-year-old girl accused him of molesting and raping her (*Albuquerque Journal*, April 29, 1999).

In addition to the sexual abuse suffered by female prisoners, there were also numerous instances of administrative incompetence, at best:

- In March 1999, when Cornell brought in Lawrence Barreras as the jail's new warden, the company forgot to tell the county one thing: Barreras had been fired from his job as the head of a state prison in Roswell just two years earlier. According to a lawsuit filed by Barreras, the accusations against him included "conspiring to misappropriate public funds for private gain" (*The New Mexican*, June 2, 1999).

- On October 29, 1999, *The New Mexican* reported that "The Santa Fe County jail, once proposed as a money maker, has hit the county again in the pocketbook" to the tune of $80,000. It turns out that Cornell and the company's contractor, Landmark Organization, paid workers 40 percent less than was allowed under the state's minimum-wage law. The state forced all three parties involved to cough up $80,000 apiece, an amount that is still a fraction of what workers are owed.

- On March 31, 2000, *The New Mexican* reported that Cornell "regularly submits bills to the city of Santa Fe for housing the city's prisoners that are so over inflated Santa Fe simply refuses to pay them … there are so many corrections to make to the bills, the city has a full-time employee whose main job is to dispute the charges." In the same article, the Santa Fe's deputy police chief estimated the bills have a "30 percent error rate."

While Cornell was running the Santa Fe jail, it was so dependent on the $65 per day that prisoners brought in from the city that they failed to release them on time, even when sheriff's deputies came to the jail bearing release orders signed by a judge. State District Judge T. Glen Ellington became so tired of having his release orders delayed by Cornell that, in August 1999, he gave the company seventy-two hours to come up with a release policy before moving prisoners in his division to another jail (*Albuquerque Journal*, August 10, 1999). Despite the judge's ultimatum, the problem continued according to Attorney Val Whitley, who told *The New Mexican* more than a year later the jail's managers "think they have more power than judges" (October 11, 2000).

Rehabilitation and restoration require funds, which adversely affect the bottom line for companies involved in prison privatization. Their goal is to expend as little per day per prisoner as possible, thus ensuring a larger profit margin. Programs that seek to rehabilitate or restore those prisoners inhibit this goal. Therefore, educational, job training, medical, mental health, and substance abuse programs are often underfunded or simply nonexistent.

The examples of medical misconduct are particularly egregious:

- Anthony Bowman, a young African American man, died of pneumonia while serving a six-year sentence for check forgery, after a CCA doctor denied him adequate medical care. The CCA's doctor was working under an incentive contract, later ruled unconstitutional, that allowed him to double his salary by achieving steep reductions in medical costs. (More info. [http://www.tennessean.com/sii/00/06/26/cca26.shtml].)

- Rosalind Bradford, a twenty-three-year-old woman held at a CCA facility in Silverdale, Tennessee, died from an undiagnosed complication during pregnancy after CCA officials let her suffer in agony for twelve hours before taking her to a hospital (http://past.thenation.com/issue/980105/0105bate.htm).

- At Cornell's Santa Fe County jail, prisoners consistently reported problems obtaining prescribed medications and getting adequate treatment during the period when Cornell was operating the jail (*The New Mexican*, March 31, August 30, and October 11, 2000). After touring the jail, a grand jury reported that medical areas "failed even the most minimum sanitary requirements" (*Albuquerque Journal*, December 2, 2000).

- Inadequate medical care was also a problem at Cornell's Great Plains Correctional Facility in Oklahoma, where the Department of Corrections levied its greatest fine ever ($168,750) against the company for not meeting its medical service obligations and withholding information from the state (Associated Press, March 11, 2000).

3. Existing PC(USA) policy calls for the rehabilitation of prisoners and their reintegration into society.

This not only differs from but also directly contradicts the for-profit private prison industry's goals, as the above examples demonstrate. The overriding theme of past church policy statements has been the assertion that our criminal justice system not be one of merely punishment. We as Christians are prohibited from venturing into the sin of revenge seeking. Instead, the system is to be focused on the rehabilitation and restoration of the offender. Such a vision is threatening to the for-profit private prison industry. Its whole reason for being is to warehouse at a profit prisoners who have been neither rehabilitated nor restored to the community.

4. Existing PC(USA) policy emphasizes community responsibility and involvement.

In its 1972 statement on *Justice and the Imprisoned*, the UPCUSA noted, "it is imperative that the bulk of correctional programs be restructured as small, intensive, and varied endeavors that keep the offender in the community while providing a measure of corrective help fully commensurate with his or her needs" (*Minutes*, UPCUSA, 1972, Part I, p.428). The for-profit private prison industry seeks to avoid or at least limit outside interference in its 'business.' By contrast, Christians believe this community involvement is necessary for three reasons:

a. Community involvement is required to allow for Jesus' mandated ministry.

In the same statement from 1972 that was mentioned above, the UPCUSA reminded the church that "the witness of Jesus demonstrates that Christians must show compassion and do justly for those our society has incarcerated" (*Minutes*, UPCUSA, 1972, Part I, p. 427). It also reminded the church that "the church is called to proclaim a gospel of deliverance and reconciliation" (*Minutes*, UPCUSA, 1972, Part I, p.427). In 1978, the PCUS "challeng[ed] the church in witness and work to provide a ministry to prisons and prisoners that is spiritual in its aims to add to the spiritual dimensions of the redemptive love of Jesus Christ to worthy rehabilitative efforts" (*Minutes*, PCUS, 1978, Part I, p. 203). Prison ministry finds its basis on the biblical witness of Luke 4:18, Heb. 13:3 and Matt. 25:31–46, which all speak to the necessity of ministering to those in prison, as well as to other scriptural texts noting God's concern for the marginalized and the oppressed.

All programs cost extra money in terms of staff, security, and resources. Therefore, the cost of ministry programs conflicts with the goal of private prisons to increase profits. Should they be successful in their goals of rehabilitation, they would also conflict with the necessity of the private prison industry to keep as many beds full as possible.

b. Community involvement is required to ensure citizen monitoring of conditions.

In its 1978 statement, the PCUS declared members of the body of Christ are in a unique position in regard to the incarcerated. It notes that "we see them through the eyes of the Crucified Christ whose death and resurrection give us hope that God abandons no human life and leads us to advocate a social order where compassion and justice characterize our efforts to those in the prison system" (*Minutes*, PCUS, 1978, Part I, p. 204). Such an order cannot be accomplished when we have no knowledge of how the children of God are being treated behind prison walls. That for-profit private prisons try to shy away from society's oversight does not relieve Christians of their duty toward those who are captive there.

Indeed, their increased vulnerability gives them more of a claim upon us. Entrusting fellow human beings to the hands of the for-profit private prison industry means abandoning our responsibility to them and trusting the private prison companies to care for them. This is necessitated by the fact that, as the system is currently configured, for-profit private prisons are less accountable to community pressure and not required to be as forthcoming with information as governmental entities. Putting the already vulnerable prisoner population in a situation that leaves them further at risk is unacceptable to Christians, who are called to minister to and advocate for these same children of God.

Rather than abandoning them to their fates, the 1972 statement on Prison Reform by the PCUS asks pastors and churches to take steps to monitor the well being of prisoners by insisting on citizen inspection of penal institutions in their area and confronting political candidates, courts, and other members of the system for reforms. However, this is much more difficult in the case of for-profit private prisons, which insist on their rights to "private property" and "trade secrets" to discourage oversight and investigation.

c. Community involvement is required to maintain ties between prisoners and their families.

In 1978, the PCUS called upon its members to recognize that "human justice can only reflect God's justice as it creates and preserves life in community" (*Minutes*, PCUS, 1978, Part I, p. 200). It went on to assert that "a system that deliberately isolates people from other people, separates them from the opposite sex or from their families helps create and encourage the very antisocial behavior it is supposed to remedy" (*Minutes*, PCUS, 1978, Part I, p. 200).

Private prisons do this in a number of ways. First, they separate families by moving incarcerated individuals to other states, where it is more difficult to receive visits from family members. From the point of view of the for-profit private prison corporations, what's critical is to keep as many "beds" filled as possible. To them, capacity means profitability. But, because their prisons are located throughout the country, they need to move prisoners primarily at their discretion to keep as many beds filled as possible.

Transportation of prisoners from the place of their adjudication to a for-profit private prison and back plus any transportation between private institutions is handled by private companies which contract with the private prisons or by the for-profit private prison corporations themselves through wholly-owned subsidiaries. Some prisoners have described the time on the road in such arrangements as the worst time of their life. This transportation is unregulated, unsafe and, like the rest of this business, driven by the profit motive. There are reports of prisoners traveling by bus for as many as seventeen days because of circuitous routes or the need to stay in another private prison owned by the same corporation—if they are not left on the bus all night. Prisoners from Hawaii have been sent to Minnesota, prisoners from Alabama to Arizona, all to make sure that private prison beds are filled and profits being made. In this situation, prisoners are treated not as human beings but as capital commodities; the corporation maintains its 'liquidity' by moving them at will. This distance also makes it harder for the individual to be reintegrated into his or her community.

Conclusion: The Church's Call

Our church is called to raise her prophetic voice to demand justice on behalf of our sisters and brothers, children of God, who are incarcerated. The composition of the population of our prisons should raise an alarm for anyone called upon to speak for the oppressed. We are called not merely to offer our forgiveness to those who have traveled a road of oppression, deprivation and racism while we were busy maintaining our own security but to ask for God's forgiveness and theirs for our complicity in what our criminal justice system has become.

Presbyterian policy has opposed prisons in general as the primary means of addressing criminal behavior since 1972. Not only have we been collectively guilty in not addressing these problems, but also trends of social injustice and punishment over rehabilitation have significantly worsened in the last thirty years.

Christ calls us to turn a critical eye to a system that is at least partly responsible for the social, political, economic, moral, and spiritual conditions that make some of our members weak, threatened, helpless, sick, and tempted to antisocial behavior. It is the very society in which we live and which we have helped establish that creates the poor, weak, and oppressed whom God calls us to serve. We fail these members of our community when we let our governments assign prisoners to for-profit private prisons and only provide needed services and treatment programs after a person has committed a crime and is incarcerated.

The for-profit private prison corporations are substantially outside the scope of governmental regulation and control. They exploit the most vulnerable members of society. They isolate and make invisible the people they lock up. For-profit private prisons are a moral evil, which on a religious as well as an ethical basis cannot continue to exist. When we allow our governments to hire private corporations to run our prisons as if they were for-profit businesses and nothing else, we are abdicating our responsibility.

We have had policy on criminal justice issues by our church throughout its history, yet many of us ignore the need for reconciliation and have abandoned these children of God—first to a punitive government and now to a for-profit industry where they are seen not as human beings worthy of respect but as commodities from which to profit. The church must cry out in opposition to these exploitative, isolating, and unaccountable practices while joining with others in our midst that are proclaiming a vision where restorative not punitive justice allows us to more closely emulate God's justice and God's kingdom.

Appendix A

Notes on the Resolution

This section provides additional information on some of the strategies and tactics summarized in the resolution.

1. Support state and local legislation as well as federal.

Federal legislation to permanently abolish for-profit private prisons is an ideal long-term goal and, in the long run the only thing that will finally resolve this issue. In the short run, it's also critical to act legislatively at the state, county and city/town level. Significant gains have been made already at these levels. In many jurisdictions, the PCUSA can play a leadership role in working towards such legislation.

2. Ban the interstate commerce in private prisoners.

This is one of the most appalling aspects of the for-profit private prison industry: As noted above, "Some prisoners have described the time on the road in such arrangements as the worst time of their life." This 'commerce in souls' flies in the face of everything that is known about rehabilitation. Both common sense and experience suggest that, the closer to home a prisoner does his or her time, the smaller the chance that she or he will return to prison after release. (Norman Holt and Donald Miller, *Explorations in Inmate-Family Relationships*, Research Division, California Department of Corrections, Sacramento, California, January 1972.) The central finding of this research is the strong and consistent positive relationship that exists between parole success and maintaining strong family ties while in prison. http://www.fcnetwork.org) The for-profit private prison industry, however, treats prisoners as commodities rather than as human beings, transporting them thousands of miles from home for the convenience and profit of these corporations.

Obviously, a federal ban on the interstate trade in prisoners would be ideal, but difficult in the current political climate. However, there are opportunities for action at the state and local level. States, counties and cities (with the states being the most critical) can pass legislation making it illegal to send prisoners out of their jurisdiction to for-profit private prisons, as well as legislation making it illegal to bring private prisoners into the state. The latter has already been done successfully in North Carolina and can be a model for other states.

3. Ban the construction of speculation prisons.

Speculation or "spec" prisons are one of the most insidious elements of the for-profit private prison industry. These are prisons constructed without authorization from any governmental body. In essence, a for-profit private prison corporation simply builds a prison in a convenient location and then goes shopping nationally for prisoners to fill it, sometimes using the services of so-called "bed brokers." The speculation prisons in particular have been a major motivating element in the interstate commerce in prisoners. States, counties and cities can pass legislation making it illegal to construct for-profit private prisons without specific authorization from that jurisdiction.

4. Ban the use of private prisons to house juveniles.

Some of the most appalling examples of abuse by the for-profit private prison industry come from juvenile facilities. The CBS 60 Minutes II presentation on Wackenhut's juvenile facility in Jena, Louisiana, for example, presents stomach-churning documentation of violence and degradation. Unfortunately, this is only one example among many. A critical step towards the abolition of all for-profit private prisons can be the elimination of private facilities to house juvenile offenders.

5. Intervene to prevent the renewal of government contracts with for-profit private prison corporations.

Many of the contracts that have been signed with for-profit private prison corporations are for three-year terms. When these contracts come up for renewal, it's important to intervene to prevent them from being renegotiated. This is particularly critical now, because the for-profit private prison industry is agitating for significantly longer contracts of up to twenty years in length. Such long-term contracts make a mockery of any pretension of public accountability and give the industry virtual carte blanche to operate as it chooses.

Furthermore, contracts with for-profit private prison corporations limit the ability of government to manage responsibly. Recently, the state of Mississippi, facing a reduction in number of prisoners, tried to cut down on the number of prisoners it sent to for-profit private facilities—but was informed by the industry that it would have to make the contractual payments per prisoner per day, whether those prisoners were actually sent to the private facilities or not. When Ohio faced a budget crisis, it was forced to close a public prison rather than a private one, because breaking its contract with the private prison corporation would have entailed substantial damages.

6. Withdraw PCUSA investment from financial institutions that support the for-profit private prison industry.

The for-profit private prison industry does not operate in a political or economic vacuum. One key reason why it has been able to prosper and profit is the inability of government at all levels to finance the construction of new prisons. When the private prison corporations offer to finance this construction on their own, they relieve government of the need to go to the voters for bond authorization and allow these expenses to be hidden in the budget as operating rather than capital costs.

In almost all cases, though, the for-profit private prison corporations are not using their own funds to build these prisons. These costs are underwritten by both commercial and investment banks, including such well-known financial institutions as Lehman Brothers. It is critical to send a clear message to these financial institutions that, if they continue to make for-profit private prisons possible through their investment in the industry, they can no longer count on the business of socially responsible religious and secular institutions.

Appendix B

Context and History II:
Prisons and the Criminal Justice System

Prisons and the criminal justice system in the United States are a manifestation of our failures and sins. In the last 20 years, what was already a critical problem has exploded into a crisis of radical proportions. Among the statistics that bear this out:

- The United States currently incarcerates over two million human beings in prisons, jails and detention centers (Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Corrections Statistics," www.ojp.usdoj.gov/correct.htm).

- Although the U.S. has only 5 percent of the world's population (one person in 20), the U.S. has 25 percent of all of the world's prisoners (one prisoner in four) (The Sentencing Project, "U.S. Continues to be World Leader in Incarceration," August 2001, <www.sentencingproject.org/news/usno1.pdf>).

- One in three African American men in his twenties is either in prison, on probation, or on parole. There are currently more African American men in prison than in colleges and universities.

The number of people under the control of the U.S. criminal justice system is staggering. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics of U.S. Department of Justice, at the end of 2000, 1.4 million people were in state and federal prisons and 700,000 were detained in local jails, bringing the total prison population to more than 2 million people, as noted above. (Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Corrections Statistics," <www.ojp.usdoj.gov/correct.htm>). Adding to the over two million currently in prisons, jails and detention centers the additional 4.5 million people on probation or parole gives a total figure of 6.5 million human beings under the control of the U.S. criminal justice system, more than two percent of the national population (Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Adults in the Correctional Population" <www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/glance/corr2.htm>).

Since 1980, the prison population of the United States has grown quickly and dramatically. In the past twenty years, the number of offenders in federal and state prison has quadrupled. The U.S. incarceration rate (the number of offenders per 100,000 people) has risen 237 percent, from 139 to 468 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Incarceration Rate," <www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/glance/incrt.htm>). Between 1990 and 2000, the nation's prison population rose an average of 1,500 individuals per week. In 2000 alone, the total number of offenders in federal prisons rose by more than 40,000 (The Lionheart Foundation, "Corrections in the U.S. . . . The Picture Today." www.lionheart.org/corrections.html>).

The United States' incarceration rate has now surpassed even that of Russia. In contrast to the U.S. incarceration rate of 468 persons imprisoned per 100,000 population, comparable industrial societies in Western Europe have significantly lower ratios, including Great Britain (125), Spain (110), Germany (95) and the Scandinavian countries (50 to 60) (The Sentencing Project, "U.S. Continues to be World Leader in Incarceration," August 2001, <www.sentencingproject.org/news/usno1.pdf>).

Ironically, this explosive growth in the nation's prison population has occurred during a decade of rapidly falling crime rates. The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that between 1993 and 2000, the violent crime and property crime rates each fell by 44 percent, with declines most noticeable in murder (61 percent decline), rape (60 percent), robbery (46 percent), and motor vehicle theft (55 percent) (Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Criminal Victimization 2000: Changes 1999-2000 with Trends 1993-2000." <www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/cv00.pdf>). According to a September 2000 report published by The Sentencing Project, those states that saw sharp drops in criminal activity had also generally experienced smaller increases in their incarceration rates, meaning that the drop in crime rates was not caused by increased incarceration (The Sentencing Project, "Diminishing Returns: Crime and Incarceration in the 1990s."www.sentencingproject.org>).

Such policies have not only social impacts but also significant financial costs. According to the Justice Policy Institute, state and federal governments spent over $38 billion in 1999 to incarcerate approximately 1.4 million Americans (Justice Policy Institute, The Punishing Decade: Prison and Jail Estimates and the Millennium. www.cjcj.org/punishing decade). Such figures can only be truly understood if they are set alongside other, competing budgetary priorities. The amount of money spent by the federal government on corrections is 50 percent more than the amount spent on welfare programs that serve 8.5 million people and six times more than the federal government spent on child care programs that serve 1.25 million children (Camp. Camille Graham, and Camp, George M., *The Corrections Yearbook 1998*. Middletown, CT: The Criminal Justice Institute, 1999).

Moreover, unless priorities are redirected, spending on prisons will continue to absorb increasing amounts of taxpayer monies. The U.S. General Accounting Office has documented the steady growth of prison operating costs from $3.1 billion in 1980 to $17 billion in 1994, a trend driven largely by the incarceration of nonviolent drug offenders and the imposition of longer sentences, caused by such legislative measures as mandatory minimums and "three strikes and you're out" laws (General Accounting Office, Federal and State Prisons: Inmate Populations, Costs, and Projection Models. Washington, D.C.: General Accounting Office, 1996). These figures, moreover, underestimate the real cost of dependence on prisons, for they do not include debt servicing, tax abatements, or other fiduciary measures necessary to finance the construction boom.

A six-month investigation by Mother Jones in 2001 found that, although more tax money is spent nationally on education than on constructing and operating prisons, the gap has narrowed significantly over the past twenty years. From 1980 to 2000, inflation-adjusted per capita spending on prisons rose from $44 to $129, an increase of almost 200 percent, while education rose from $161 to $212, only a 32 percent increase ("Prison Spending Growing Six Times Faster than Education Spending." Mother Jones July 2001, <www.motherjones.com/about_us/pressroom/prisons_release.html>).

It would seem logical to assume that, with so many new prisons being built, the chronic overcrowding in prisons would have been reduced. Unfortunately, the opposite is true. Due to the increased reliance on incarceration over the past ten years, many prisons continue to be significantly overcrowded, with two and three prisoners assigned to cells designed for one. According to the U.S. Justice Department in August 2001, state and federal prisons operated at 15 percent and 31percent above capacity respectively (Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prison Statistics." <www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/prisons.htm>). The Federal Bureau of Prisons recently announced that it would open thirty new prisons in the next seven years to house 50,000 prisoners.

The need to reduce overcrowding, along with the financial burdens that come with operating a massively expanded prison system, are reasons often cited by government officials when arguing for new prison construction. However, there is considerable evidence that new prison construction is actually the major factor in expanding prison population, rather than the other way around, as is commonly assumed and argued. As long as there are "beds" available, even if this means double- and triple-celling prisoners, even if it means building hundreds of new prisons, legislators will have no reason to rethink the regressive policies that have sent millions of nonviolent offenders to prison rather than to rehabilitation and community service.

It is also critical to understand who these new prisoners are. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 69 percent of the nation's population is white, 12 percent Black, 13 percent Hispanic, 4 percent Asian, and 1 percent Native American. The nation's prison population does not begin to mirror these figures. Over half of all those incarcerated in the United States are persons of color, a result of the widely different rates at which people of color and white people are arrested, arraigned, convicted and sentenced. The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that at the end of 2000, the incarceration rate for Black men was 3,500 per 100,000; for Hispanic men, 1,220 per 100,000; and for white men, 449 per 100,000. In other words, Hispanic men were imprisoned at a rate 272 percent that of white men. African American men were imprisoned at a rate 770 percent that of white men (The Lionheart Foundation, "Corrections in the U.S. . . .The Picture Today" <www.lionheart.org/corrections.html>).

The number of women in prison is also growing precipitously. Women are entering prisons at a rate faster than any other segment of the national prison population. Although women only comprise 6 percent of those incarcerated (U.S. Justice Department, 1999), the number of women entering prison has risen by 400 percent since 1990, about twice the rate of increase for men. Many have been sentenced to long sentences under mandatory minimum drug laws. Overall, 40 percent of women admitted to state prisons had been convicted of drug offenses (<abc.news.go.com/sections/us/dailynews/prison000420.html>).

The number of juveniles arrested and sentenced to prison terms has also grown as a result of the "tough on crime" policies enacted at the state and federal levels. According to a 1997 U.S. Justice Department report, if current trends persist, one in twenty children alive today will serve a sentence in a state or federal prison in her or his lifetime (Bureau of Justice Statistics, Criminal Offenders Statistics."<www.opj.usdoj.gov/bjs/crimoff.htm>).

The increased rate of incarceration also affects the children of parents in prison. Currently, almost 1.5 million children have at least one parent incarcerated, a 60 percent increase since 1991 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Incarcerated Parents and their Children." Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics, August 2000).

Finally, it is important to note the extent to which today's prisoners are nonviolent offenders. More than 50 percent of those incarcerated today have committed nonviolent crimes, crimes that do not involve bodily injury or the threat of bodily injury to others. Many of these nonviolent offenders not only have been sentenced because of drug offenses but are substance abusers themselves. A 1997 RAND Corporation study found that drug treatment reduces serious crimes fifteen times more than mandatory minimums and ten times more than conventional sentences (RAND study MR827-DPRC, 1997).

Although whites and people of color use drugs in virtually identical proportions, there is a significant racial basis in sentencing for nonviolent drug offenders. Cocaine, for example, exists in different forms. "Powder cocaine" is the form of choice for most white users, "crack cocaine" for most users of color. Yet sentences for crack cocaine are significantly harsher than for powder cocaine. Both people of color and whites use the same drug but, because of the disparity in sentencing laws, people of color receive much longer sentences.

Popular opinion is beginning to agree. A 2001 referendum in California, a state known for its regressive sentencing policies ("three strikes and you're out" is a California invention) determined that nonviolent drug offenders should be sentenced to rehabilitation rather than to incarceration.

The astounding growth in the number of those imprisoned over the past twenty years has been disheartening to many. It has disrupted and destroyed individual lives, families and communities. It has had a negative financial impact on almost all other public and social service programs, from education to health care.

Yet not everyone is troubled. A handful of for-profit private prison corporations, for the most part newly organized but also rooted in old histories, have seen this not as a human tragedy but as a remarkable opportunity for growth and profit. These corporations have been among the main beneficiaries of the radical growth in the number of U.S. prisoners over the past twenty years. Increasingly, as they have gained power and access through their think tanks, trade associations, lobbyists

and campaign contributions, they have also become one of the central forces driving criminal justice policy in a regressive direction.

Thus, the for-profit private prison corporations are both an effect and a cause of the current prison crisis. In order to analyze not only current prison policy but also what we can and must do to change it, we need to know and understand who these corporations are and how they got to this position of power. It is to this history that we now turn.

Appendix C

Context and History III: The Rise of For-Profit Private Prisons

During the early part of this nation's history, federal and state governments contracted many criminal justice functions out to private individuals and companies. The transportation of felons to the English colonies in North America, and their subsequent employment in the tobacco fields, involved signing contracts with merchants and landowners. With the advent of the penitentiary in the late 1700s, Americans copied British tradition and employed private jailers to warehouse the small-incarcerated population. Such facilities, though, were exploitative and inhumane, as jailers locked up prisoners regardless of age or whether the individual had committed a violent or non-violent act. Jailers also demanded money from prisoners or their families for better food and other basic services.

Following the American Civil War, through the infamous Convict Lease System, southern states contracted out prisoners to the private sector as laborers for farms, roads, railroads, and mines. The resulting abuses were so scandalous that, by the early 20th century, the system had been made illegal by virtually every southern legislature.

The first privately built and operated prison was in San Quentin, California. Within a decade, the state took over its operations due to mismanagement by the staff. Other for-profit private prisons experienced infamous scandals involving political corruption and the abuse of prisoners.

The Progressive Era's emphasis on professionalism, efficiency, and reform ended these experiments with private prisons. Due to the expense involved in taking over the field of corrections, governments allowed for-profit and non-profit firms to bid on certain prison services such as food preparation, health care, and transportation. With these exceptions, the for-profit private prison industry folded by 1920.

Their current drive to have private firms own and operate prisons began fifty years later in the mid-1970s in the areas of juvenile justice and so-called "illegal aliens." In 1976, RCA Services took over the Weaversville Intensive Treatment Unit in North Hampton, Pennsylvania, which attempted to rehabilitate young boys. The Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) followed a decade later when its leaders signed contracts with private firms to house three thousand so-called "illegal aliens" in seven facilities. In 1988, Kentucky signed the first contract between a state government and a for-profit private prison corporation.

These developments ushered in the "modern era" for the for-profit private prison industry. Today, approximately 6 percent of those incarcerated in the U.S. are in prisons operated and sometimes owned by for-profit private prison corporations, over 120,000 human beings in all. These corporations have become significant political players at the local, state and federal level, influencing not only the privatization of existing facilities and the construction of new ones, but criminal justice and sentencing policies as well.

In the process, the for-profit private prison corporations and their allies have developed and made a number of arguments in support of their position. In order to understand why elected and appointed officials have in many cases supported for-profit private prisons, it is necessary to analyze and understand these arguments.

Appendix D

Case Study: Youngstown

This appendix is comprised of learnings from the experience in Youngstown, Ohio, where Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) built a 1,500 bed prison in 1995 and closed it in 2001. The problems raised here are assumed to be either representative of other private prisons or, at least, representative of potential situations for other institutions.

1. Private prison staffing patterns and their ramifications include

    a. low staff-to-offender ratio,

b. inadequate training,

c. safety issues,

d. transportation,

e. escapes,

Narrative Explanation

Since profit is defined as revenue exceeding expenses, and since, by contract, the revenue portion of each private prison's budget is limited to a per prisoner/per day amount, the way to assure profit is to limit expenses. The largest expense is staff and that is the most reasonable place to look for the cost savings that will result in profit. The most obvious way to evaluate staff levels is to compare the staff-to-prisoner ratio. These figures are considered proprietary information by private prisons. Sometimes the explanation is that such information, made public, is a security risk. Nevertheless, smaller staff, both administrative and correctional, contributes to safety concerns.

The experience in Youngstown, Ohio, included the recruitment and swift training of the majority of correctional officers who would have direct contact with the prisoners. These people had varying levels of education before applying for jobs at the Northeast Ohio Correctional Center (NOCC). While top-level administrators who were CCA employees moved to Youngstown to start the prison, the vast majority of correctional officers were totally inexperienced in prison work. These people received four weeks of training at a time when Ohio state correctional officers were completing six weeks before actually handling prisoners. This 33 percent savings on training costs for CCA had ramifications that were not rectified for three years.

During the first six months of operation, the NOCC filled to more than 1,500 prisoners. There were numerous assaults among the prisoners and the local newspaper reported that 400 hand-fashioned weapons were removed from prisoners during that time. By the time the prison had been open for twelve months, two prisoners were dead and thirteen crimes of assault had been charged by local police. In July 1998, six prisoners (five serving time for murder) escaped through the fence one afternoon while correctional officers were not looking. The city was thrown into a panic and people didn't feel safe in their homes.

Ironically, once public pressure forced Corrections Corporation of America to bring the prison closer to generally accepted standards, there was no longer enough profit to be made for the company and it was closed. It is still standing empty today.

2. Decrease in already inadequate level of mental and physical health care.

Narrative Explanation

The anecdotal information from the Youngstown experience (there was no access to statistical information) is that prisoners were denied necessary care for chronic conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure and long term effects of injuries, such as nerve and muscle damage and other maladies. The prison hired a physician and only through that system does a prisoner have access to specialists or further treatment. Since the medical care of the prisoners is included in the per day rate of reimbursement, there is a strong incentive against providing physical or mental health services. For-profit private prisons, as private rather than public institutions, have the right to turn clergy away, if they so choose, even if a prisoner has requested their presence, since prisoners have no legal right to be visited.

3. Lack of accountability of private prisons to citizens, governments, offenders, and their families.

a. access to information on types of offenses and security classifications of those incarcerated in the facility,

b. public health issues,

c. vendor contracts,

Narrative Explanation

Not only was no information made available to citizens or local law enforcement, it was later learned that NOCC received prisoners with no classification or medical information. As the classification debacle became public, the unresolved discrepancies between the classification standards of the District of Columbia (D.C.) (the incarcerating authority), CCA (the contractor), and the Ohio Department of Corrections (the system familiar to law enforcement and judges in the Youngstown area) became apparent. These issues should have been resolved before prisoners were transferred, but the profit motive did not support that investment of time.

In Youngstown, the city health commissioner was denied access twice to the kitchen for a routine inspection during construction. His intent was to follow city procedures about inspecting for kitchen safety and sanitary conditions. Additionally, the commissioner was denied information about the numbers of prisoners with HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis.

Private prisons often assign food service, telephone service, transportation, medical care, and educational functions to vendors. The needs of prisoners, their families, or the community are secondary to the profit motive. The food vendor at the Youngstown prison operated both the meal program for prisoners and the vending machines throughout the institution and the commissary. At other prisons, prisoners were able to have their lunch in the visitation room, but in Youngstown they had to rely on their visitors purchasing food from the vending machines. Remember that the visitors to the Youngstown prison traveled mostly from the D.C. area, about six hours, so that visits often extended over mealtimes.

4. Private prisons are immune directly from change advocacy through the political process on issues of

   a. prisoner placement,

   b. costs of phone calls,

   c. abuse by staff or other prisoners,

   d. existence and effectiveness of rehabilitative programs through education, job training, drug and alcohol treatment, religious services, mental health services, community-based programs.

Margaret Moore, then director of the Department of Corrections of the District of Columbia, responded to a concern about the distance between D.C. and Youngstown in relation to family visits by saying, “Convicts don’t get to choose where they serve their time.” While that is certainly the case in all systems of criminal justice, it is highly unlikely that DC prisoners would have been sent as far away as Youngstown if it had not been for lobbying by CCA and its allies. The ability of citizens to influence conditions of incarceration for the public good is a key element in operating a system that serves.

The point here is that in either a state or federal program elected government officials are ultimately responsible and that significant pressure can be brought to bear on them. A prisoner or the family member of the prisoner can take a complaint about any of these things to someone who has publicly committed him/herself to serving the citizens and who, of equal importance, needs to run for reelection. The break in this chain of accountability presents insurmountable barriers to effective advocacy either for a particular prisoner or for the prisoner population as a whole when it comes to improving access to rehabilitation.

Appendix E

Resources for Further Study

1. *Organizations and Web Sites*

(a) Grassroots Leadership, a nonprofit organization headquartered in Charlotte, North Carolina, has done civil rights, community and labor organizing in the South since 1980. Since 1999, the members of this organization have been working to abolish for-profit private prisons. Their campaign activities include direct action organizing in a number of southern states and on college and university campuses nationally; an international corporate accountability campaign aimed at the for-profit private prison industry and its financial backers; a legal action and strategy project concerned with the legal issues raised by for-profit private prisons; and *Keeping Faith: A Religious Response to Private Prisons,* which organizes nationally within the faith community around the issue. Grassroots Leadership also provides staffing for the Public Safety and Justice Campaign, a national coalitional effort to abolish for-profit private prisons. Grassroots Leadership’s Web site includes current information on the issue. See, for example, their report *Education Versus Incarceration: A Mississippi Case Study*. www.grassrootsleadership.org

(b) Not With Our Money! is an international student campaign to end prison profiteering. Together with the youth-led Prison Moratorium Project, they initiated and coordinated the Sodexho Campaign, which persuaded the largest

shareholder in Corrections Corporation of America, the world's largest for-profit private prison corporation, to divest. Not With Our Money! recently launched the Lehman Campaign, which calls on the largest financial underwriter of the private prison industry to sever its connections with private prison corporations. www.notwithourmoney.org

(c) Good Jobs First, located in Washington, D.C., is a national resource center promoting effective and accountable state and local economic development policies. Good Jobs First serves citizens and policymakers with research, training, consulting and testimony. Their report *Jail Breaks: Economic Development Subsidies Given To Private Prisons* is available on their Web site. www.goodjobsfirst.org

(d) The National Institute on Money in State Politics is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that compiles campaign contribution information on every state-level candidate in the country. It serves as the only complete source for this data and makes its information available online. Their recent report *A Contributing Influence: The Private-Prison Industry and Political Giving in the South,* is available on their web site. www.followthemoney.org

(e) The Center for Policy Alternatives is the nation's leading nonpartisan progressive public policy and leadership development center serving state legislators, state policy organizations, and state grassroots leaders. Their recent publication *2002 Progressive Agenda: Policy Innovations for the States* includes one section titled *Privatizing Prisons* and another titled *Privatizing Public Services.* The report includes recommended legislative language. www.stateaction.org

2. *Books*

At present, there are only two books in print that deal extensively (but not exclusively) with for-profit private prisons. Both are essential readings for anyone trying to understand the issue, at least in part because they set it within a broader analysis of what's happening in the United States today related to prisons and criminal justice.

Joseph T. Hallinan, *Going Up the River: Travels in a Prison Nation,* Random House, New York, 2001. Hallinan is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, a former Nieman Fellow at Harvard University, and a staff writer for the *Wall Street Journal.*

Joel Dyer, *The Perpetual Prisoner Machine: How America Profits from Crime,* Westview Press, Boulder, 2000. Dyer is a former editor of *Boulder Weekly* whose work has been featured in the *New York Times* and *Utne Reader.* He is the author of *Harvest of Rage: Why Oklahoma City Is Only the Beginning.*

In addition to these, there are several recent books that provide an excellent history and analysis of the context within which for-profit private prisons have emerged.

Sasha Abramsky, *Hard Time Blues: How Politics Built A Prison Nation,* St. Martin's Press, New York, 2002. Abramsky has written for *The Atlantic Monthly, New York* magazine, *The Village Voice* and *Rolling Stone.* In 2000, he was awarded a Soros Media Fellowship.

Marc Mauer, *Race To Incarcerate,* New Press, New York, 1999. Mauer is Deputy Director of The Sentencing Project in Washington. D.C., which arguably provides the best statistical analysis of prisons and prisoners today.

Christian Parenti, *Lockdown America,* Verso, New York, 1999. While not dealing with for-profit private prisons specifically, Parenti's book looks at the interrelationships of prisons, the criminal justice and military systems in the U.S. today from the point of view of the "prison-industrial complex."

For an analysis of the closest historical parallel to today's for-profit private prisons, the "convict lease system" of the 19th-century South, see:

David M. Oshinsky, *"Worse Than Slavery": Parchman Farm and the Ordeal of Jim Crow Justice, Free Press,* New York, 1996.

Alex Lichtenstein, Twice the Work of Free Labor: The Political Economy of Convict Labor in the New South, Verso, New York, 1996.

Item 07-02

Full Text Rationale for "Living Faithfully with Families in Transition"

These recommendations are in response to the following referrals:

- *1997 Referral: 35.0087. Response to Recommendation to Call Upon the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy to Examine the Issue of Changing Families and Changing Social Structures that Support Families, Particularly Focusing on the Effects of These on Children—From the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy* (*Minutes*, 1997, Part I, pp. 44, 536).

- *Commissioners' Resolution 98-23. On Support of Families and Children* (*Minutes*, 1998, Part I, pp. 55, 748).

Almost every societal problem has the potential to have an impact on the family. Conversely, as the basic building block of society, the family can also be portrayed as being at the root of every social problem. Indeed, the family can too easily become a scapegoat and itself be defined as the problem. When this happens the family becomes the focal point for public debate and power politics. Ideological fault lines open up depending on how one views the issues facing families. Every political and religious faction feels entitled to state an opinion about what is wrong with the family and what must be done to fix it. The result, over the last three decades, has been an increasing abandonment of family-supporting social policies. To the extent that the Christian church has participated in this factionalism, we need to confess our sins and to seek reconciliation and common ground that will allow for both church and public policy to strengthen U.S. families.

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A. *Stories of Our Families*

(This is a sampling of some of the stories we encountered.[3] The issues raised here are real, but do not exhaust the many issues facing our families. No story should be read as characterizing a particular racial ethnic group.)

Ralph and Ellen and their four children live in a major east coast city. Ralph is an orthopedic surgeon whose skill is highly prized; he earns a good income. Ellen is an equally well-educated and talented Presbyterian minister who prefers to balance mothering and home-making with serving a small church part-time, preaching once a month. She is also active in presbytery, chairing a committee. The family lives in an upscale neighborhood with their three biological sons and an adopted Hispanic daughter. The adoption of their daughter has opened a whole new set of challenges for the family. Ellen hired a nanny when the children were young and now has a housekeeper to assist her. What should be the response of a just society? What should be the response of the Family of God?

Married, with three young children, Deborah and Jim were both employed when Jim, the primary breadwinner, fell off a roof and was paralyzed from the neck down. Since their health insurance covers nursing care in the home for only four hours a week, Deborah has quit her job in order to care for Jim fulltime. However, persistent care needs are wearing away friends and finances. Male friends from a past of shared outdoor activities seldom drop by. Deborah struggles to take care of Jim; and she and Jim struggle to adapt to their new emotional and relational needs without neglecting the needs of their children. What should be the response of a just society? What should be the response of the Family of God?

Unmarried and in financial stress, Harold and Hannah, in their 70s, live together caring for one another and sharing meager resources. Each receives a small pension based on the work of a deceased spouse. Each would lose that income if they married. While mostly comfortable with their decision, they worry whether they are giving others a bad example. Harold does not feel fully welcome at his Presbyterian church; Hannah has been avoiding her synagogue. What should be the response of a just society? What should be the response of the Family of God?

Thirty-five-year-old Sharon is the divorced mother of two. She has been employed since graduating from high school. Three years at an insurance company were followed by ten years with the post office. However, due to the chronic, ultimately terminal, illness of her son, Sharon lost her job at the post office. After several months receiving federal assistance, she now supports her family by doing "temp" work, earning $7 an hour. She and her children are covered by Medicaid, but she will soon lose that coverage. Her children can be covered by a state program for low-income children, she cannot.[4] What should be the response of a just society? What should be the response of the Family of God?

A married, suburban family with two children, Rob and Ann are employed and, between them, work nearly ninety hours a week. In the recession of the early '90s, Rob was "downsized." During the two years he spent searching for work, the family experienced shunning by neighbors and friends, the loss of their house, domestic strife, a move to a different neighborhood of lesser status, and a significant loss of self-esteem for Rob who was forced to take work outside of his professional area and at a significantly lower salary. They worry about not

having enough time with their children, or with one another. And they worry about how they will be able to care for Ann's mother who may not be able to live by herself much longer. What should be the response of a just society? What should be the response of the Family of God?

Never married and a single thirty-five-year-old mother of a preschool child, Betty is not considered "disabled" although she has an IQ of 70. She is unable to hold down an income-producing job while caring for her child. She receives sporadic help from the father who is also of limited income-oriented abilities. Soon Betty will reach the time limit for federal assistance. But she lives in a small, rural community with few job opportunities. She also worries that her interracial child will not be fully accepted when he enters school. What should be the response of a just society? What should be the response of the Family of God?

Chung Lee came to the U.S. thirty years ago as a university graduate with $50 in his pocket and a big U.S. dream in his heart. During the day, he pumped gas and his wife June worked at a garment factory. At night, they both worked for a maintenance company cleaning buildings. After a few years, they saved up enough money to buy a small grocery market in the South Central section of Los Angeles. In the fifteen years that followed, they built up the business with the help of their two children, Esther and David, working fourteen to sixteen hours a day. There was very little time spent as a family outside the store. Then came April 29, 1992.[5] They saw their store burn to the ground. In the following ten years, they have realized that they not only lost everything that they had worked for, but also that they have lost touch with their children who are now grown and have left home. What should be the response of a just society? What should be the response of the Family of God?

A married couple with an infant, Janice and Joe made ends meet by combining Joe's job in a printing company with Janice' job of providing childcare for other children in their apartment. However, when the printing company closed, they could not pay their rent and had to move in with relatives. For six weeks, neither found a job. Now Joe does "temporary" factory work. He is employed by a "temp" agency that contracts with the factory. The contract is renewed, or not, every three months. Joe's job could end at any time. Janice works as a restaurant hostess at night, but hates not being at home in the evening. The family cannot survive on the sole income of either. They are expecting their second child.[6] What should be the response of a just society? What should be the response of the Family of God?

In Caribbean cultures it is typical for women and men to postpone marriage due to the cost of the expected celebrations. Instead, committed couples live in "faithful concubinage" and raise their families without legal or religious sanction. Some churches refuse to admit them as members. This attitude makes some say that it is easier to enter the Kingdom of God than to become a member of the church. What should be the response of a just society? What should be the response of the Family of God?

Michelle became a mother at seventeen. While she's not sure she's ready for marriage, the support of her mother and grandmother, as well as the experiences of her friends, makes her sure she can be a good mother to tiny David who was born prematurely. David's father is a hard-working, motivated young man just a few years older than Michelle. He works full-time at McDonald's (beating out one hundred other applicants for the job) and has recently been promoted to manager. However, he earns only $684 a month and has no medical benefits. Michelle doesn't like the shame she feels getting welfare assistance, but she needs the income and, especially, health insurance for David.[7] What should be the response of a just society? What should be the response of the Family of God?

Caitlin and Jeremy love both of their parents but hated their constant battling. Their fear of family violence was punctuated when their father put his fist through the wall. In one sense, their parents' divorce has brought more peace to their lives. However, their father quickly remarried. His devotion to his new wife, and her attempt to be a stepparent to them, make Caitlin and Jeremy fearful, jealous, and resentful. They are happier living with their mother, but they want their father to be a father to them. What should be the response of a just society? What should be the response of the Family of God?

Debbie and Donald are a happily married couple living out the "U.S. Dream" with two preteen children and a house in the suburbs. The family's life revolves around work, church activities, hockey and soccer practices and games, ballet, Tai Kwon Do, piano lessons, school bands, computers, TV, movies, fun with friends, the dog. This

family's life is filled with many good things. But Donald describes life as a "constant merry-go-round;" one that never stops. What should be the response of a just society? What should be the response of the Family of God?

James and Pam, both 33, are very fulfilled by each other and by their careers. They have each made sacrifices for the other as they have moved to better job sites throughout their ten-year marriage. They both strive to use their skills in the best way possible. Although Pam and James are very comfortable in their decision not to have children, they find that their church, workplaces, other family members, and even complete strangers challenge their decision as being, at worst, selfish or, at best, one that they will later regret. What should be the response of a just society? What should be the response of the Family of God?

When they met socially, Christina, a Christian, was immediately attracted to Ashraf, an immigrant Shi'ite Muslim. She admired his ambition and, she now believes, was motivated by rebellion against the constraints of her upbringing. They were married before a justice of the peace and had a reception in her parents' church, though her parents never accepted Ashraf. After less than a year, Christina revealed that she was determined to convert Ashraf to Christianity. Ashraf was resistant and responded that when children came they would be reared Muslim. What should be the response of a just society? What should be the response of the Family of God?

Through no fault of his own, seventeen-year-old John is a "couch kid." He rotates living at the homes of various friends with overnights at the top of a stairwell in an abandoned building. He is finishing high school and working part-time in a supermarket to buy food and personal items. His mother is a drug addict who physically abused John and his five younger siblings. After she divorced John's father, who was in prison for D.W.I., she married her live-in boyfriend. Within a month, when John turned fourteen, they locked him out saying he was old enough to care for himself. Although a county program taught John some skills to remain on his own, the fear and loneliness he suffered while living in a welfare hotel were so crushing that he prefers to move every few days among friends' homes. John carries all his belongings in a garbage bag, including a Bible he reads every day. What should be the response of a just society? What should be the response of the Family of God?

Robert and Stephen are a gay couple in a long-term, committed relationship that was recognized in a service of commitment in the Presbyterian church where they have been members for over ten years. With the adoption of their second child, Robert, an investment broker, quit his job to become the stay-at-home parent of the children, now ages four and one. Robert's name is the official name on the adoption papers of the children since the state in which they live does not recognize same-gender adoptive parenting or marriage. On September 11, 2001, Robert was in the World Trade Center finishing his last week at work. He died in the collapse of the first tower. What should be the response of a just society? What should be the response of the Family of God?

With these questions in mind, we ponder these stories and search for greater understanding of God's work among our families.

B. *Introduction*

When we think of "the family," many of us are likely to think first of the kind of family that characterized the decade of the 1950s. Then, for the first time in our history, a majority of U.S. families began to resemble what had been held up as a family ideal for over a century: a married, heterosexual couple with children, supported by the wages of the father and the unpaid family work of an unemployed mother. With this ideal in mind, the multiple forms that families take in the twenty-first century may appear highly unusual. To some of us, the sense that families are changing is troubling. We worry about the capacity of individuals to make and keep enduring commitments to each other. We worry about the effects of various family forms on children. We worry about the formation of children's character and faith, not merely the growth of their bodies and minds. Are children being nurtured, or merely reared, or rearing themselves? In response to these concerns, some of us suggest that the ideal family of the '50s should be restored and strengthened through religious and social mandates.

Others of us, while sharing these same concerns, question whether religious and social mandates that privilege one form of the family address our experiences of many forms of family doing the work of families equally well. We fear that racial/ethnic differences will not be valued, or even acknowledged. They even may be disparaged. We also worry that privileging an ideal from the past does not recognize the socioeconomic forces at

work that are making family life difficult for all types of families. All of these concerns raise questions about the well-being of families. Are families changing? How? Are these changes harmful or helpful? What makes modern family life seem so stressful? How should the Family of God minister to multiple forms of the human family? And how should a just society support and empower its families?

Listening to others' experiences was part of our work. We heard that changing gender roles and expectations are reorienting how family members need to relate to one another and how family responsibilities need to be renegotiated. We heard how troubling divorce is, yet how it also seems necessary sometimes. We heard of the growing numbers of single parent families in our churches, and of step- (or blended)-families[8] and foster-care families and families of gay or lesbian couples, as well as unmarried couples living together. We also heard about "families of one" and scattered relatives; of families formed between people of different faith traditions and different ethnicities. We heard about families with members who need special care and families caught in the middle of generational needs—the "sandwich generation." We heard great concern for children who spend significant amounts of time with caregivers who are not relatives. The importance of good parenting for children was on everyone's mind, as was the care of aging parents. We heard deep concern about the impact of consumerism on families, and about the influence of a culture that permeates the walls of our homes via Internet, TV, radio, and print media. And we heard about the stress of time that fractures families into individual parts that have too little time to come together as one. We listened to the concerns of racial/ethnic families who find their traditional values threatened by a U.S. cultural emphasis on nuclear families and individualism. We heard about the loss of jobs and the loss of income—and the particular stress that happens when one earner in a two-earner family has to go out looking for another job. And we heard about the fear that settles into our homes when our job remains, but others we work with have been downsized. We heard that many forms of family sit in the pews and carry out the work of our congregations. And we heard that we are worried about how to weave together good families of Christian character in a culture where "whirl is king."[9]

To understand these experiences, we sought insight from demographic data and analyses of the social, cultural, and economic changes families are experiencing. In this section we present those data. It is important to note, however, that such data are dependent on who gets counted, who is available to fill out surveys, who is most assessable to researchers. The result often is most representative of White, middle- and upper-income people. Anecdotes from other groups help us to realize the differences that exist among us.

First, briefly, a look at who we are as Presbyterians.[10] According to the "2000–2002 Background Report" of the Presbyterian Panel, although racial ethnic persons now comprise more than 20 percent of the U.S. population, 2 percent of PC(USA) church members are those of African-diasporan descent, 2 percent are Asian and Pacific Islanders, less than 2 percent are persons of Hispanic, Latino, and Spanish origin, and 96 percent are White. This racial ethnic make-up has remained essentially unchanged for over twenty years. The median age of our members has been slowly rising, from forty-nine years in 1973 to fifty-five years in 2002. Sixty percent of members are women, as are somewhat less than half of elders and about one-fourth of pastors. About 53 percent of us are employed, while one-third are retired, and 10 percent identify ourselves as full-time homemakers. Three-fourths of us are currently married; only 19 percent of us have experienced divorce.[11] The median family income of our members is $61,000 while that of our elders is $71,000, placing the median family income of many of us above that of most U.S. families. Most Presbyterians, then, were once children in the White, middle- and upper-income families of the 1950s and have been able to repeat that family form for ourselves. However, as we look at the U.S. population as a whole, we need to recognize that the life circumstances and experiences of most Presbyterians are not those of most U.S. families. Openness to the cultural, racial, and economic diversity that comprises the U.S. today may be key to reversing both the decline in Presbyterian membership as well as the cultural, racial, and economic homogeneity of our membership.

We pray: Holy God, Creator and Redeemer, we give thanks that families are a part of your great plan for creation. In your infinite wisdom, from the beginning of time you knit us into the human family and knit humanity into the family of all living things nourished and sustained by your created Earth. Then in the womb, you knit us each into our own unique and particular families that we too might be nurtured and sustained into being.

Forgive us where we fall short as families in caring for one another in our human family, in not treating all of your creation as family. Forgive us when, as a church called by one Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to live in

familial relationships with one another, we instead betray your families, arguing over petty definitions and ideologies rather than serving real families with real needs. Redeem us and lead us forth into newness of life that we may work to enable all the families of this world to live in right relationship with you and with one another and with all of your creation. Amen.

C. *Changing Families: Socioeconomic Context*

In many ways, the ideal family of the 1950s was itself an anomaly. [12] For the previous eighty years, the divorce rate had been rising and the fertility rate dropping. In the 1950s both of those patterns were reversed: fertility soared and divorces dropped. In addition, compared to rates in the preceding century, both the age for marriage and the age for motherhood fell sharply. Consequently, the teen birth rate reached a high in the 1950s that has not been matched since—97 out of 1,000 females between the ages of 15 and 19 gave birth in 1957. In fact, the U.S. had the highest proportion of married teens of any modern, industrialized country.[13]As people married younger and had more children more rapidly (increasing fertility rates substantially), the proportion of never-married people rapidly declined. Young couples were encouraged by public policies and economic conditions to set up separate households. The combination of post-war economic prosperity and a storm of federal programs, particularly the GI Bill of Rights, supported young men going to college and families' purchasing a home. Interest rates were low, energy was cheap, and employment with rising wages was steady. Aided by a strong labor movement, the income of workers rose more rapidly between 1946 and 1978 than did the income of managers. [14] In the '50s, a factory worker could earn the closing costs needed for a house in Levittown with just one day's work.

For all the good experienced by many, there was also a cost. The emphasis on early marriage meant that in the '50s women lost ground in educational parity with men. From a quarter to one-third of those 1950s marriages ultimately ended in divorce. There was no public recognition of domestic violence or child abuse, and no name for what we now call sexual harassment. [15] In contrast to the valorizing of women's employment during the Second World War, the culture of the '50s intensified and celebrated the ideal of separate gender roles and spaces. Interracial marriage was illegal and interfaith marriage was rare in the face of overt discrimination. Moreover, these unusually good economic times for some were not shared with everyone. Twenty-five percent of the U.S. population, including one-third of U.S. children, lived in desperate poverty. The poverty rate of two-parent families of African-diasporan descent was more than 50 percent even though the labor force participation rate of such women had remained at about 40 percent for the entire first half of the century. [16] While the U.S. mainstream thought families with working mothers dysfunctional, a two-earner strategy for economic survival was not new to low-income families.

1. *Dual-Earner Families*

In 1951 only 19.9 percent of wives worked in paid labor. By 1999, 47.6 percent of wives worked in wage labor.[17] This is one of the most talked about changes in U.S. families. However, the dramatic increase in the employment of wives and mothers has actually been most dramatic in White U.S. families. In 1950, White women's labor force participation rate was less than 30 percent. By 2000, it was about 59.8 percent. In comparison, between 1900 and 2000, the labor force participation rate of women of African-diasporan descent increased from 41 percent to 63.2 percent.[18] Today, nearly all parents work outside the home at some point while their children are still residing at home. In 1975, 50 percent of mothers of school-age children were active in the labor force, and by 1980, 50 percent of mothers of preschoolers worked outside the home. In 2000, about three-fourths of all mothers with children under the age of 18 were employed, including about 60 percent of mothers in married couple families with children under the age of six. 57 percent of mothers with children under the age of 3 and 51 percent of mothers with children younger than one year of age were employed, as were almost 68 percent of single mothers with children under six. [19] Now working mothers and, in married-couple families, two working parents are the norm.

Certainly one reason for this change has been the success of the women's movement in gaining more education and more equal opportunities for women in the public sphere. However, that is only part of the story. Economic changes that are significantly reshaping the U.S. workforce are another cause of this change in family life. Between 1979 and 1998 middle-income families would have seen no growth in income had wives not

increased their earnings. Between 1979 and 1995, real hourly wages (that is, wages adjusted for changes in the cost of living) fell for the bottom 70 percent of wage earners.[20]For the median wage male worker, the wage decline amounted to about 15 percent. The wage decline was greatest among young workers and workers without a college degree—75 percent of the workforce. The stark result is that the share of workers earning poverty-level wages has increased from 23.6 percent in 1973 to 26.8 percent in 1999. For men the increase was dramatic: from 12.8 percent of male workers earning poverty-level wages in 1973 to 20.7 percent in 1999. While the share of women workers earning poverty-level wages declined in the same period, it remains significantly larger than men's (33.4 percent in 1999). [21] According to the PCUSA Taskforce on Issues of Vocation and Problems of Work, the Joint Economic Committee of the U.S. Congress estimated that if women, meaning primarily White women, had not entered the labor force in large numbers, real family income would have dropped 18 percent between 1980 and 1986 (a recession period). [22]

Wage trends are symptomatic of other economic conditions being experienced by most U.S. families. For example, many of today's families face lost or reduced health insurance coverage through employer-sponsored medical plans, rising employee contributions for health insurance coverage and co-payments, and longer waiting periods before eligibility for enrollment. Similarly, the percentage of employees covered by defined-benefit pension plans has dropped significantly in the last two decades. In the place of such plans, 401Ks offer greater employment flexibility but require larger employee contributions that are subject to the ups and downs of the stock market. The typical worker, now faced at 65 with a retirement income that is less than 50 percent of his/her pre-retirement pay, is choosing to continue to work for several more years in order to afford retirement. [23]

The absorption of more of our lifetime into employed work is not only a retirement issue. U.S. workers are now working more hours in a year than are the workers of any other industrialized nation. Between 1970 and 1990, the average U.S. worker added 164 hours of employed work, a month of work, to their work year.[24] Thus, since the 1970s most U.S. families have faced declining real wages and benefits and increasing fears about job instability. Under these pressures, families have responded by adding more workers to the workforce and spending more time at work. The two-earner family is an economic necessity for U.S. families, as are the long hours spent at work. Only because of these strategies has real median income for families risen slightly over the past three decades.

2. *Young Adults*

These economic trends shape the conditions that young adults face as they start out in life, conditions greatly different from the 1950s. The shift in the U.S. economy from manufacturing jobs to service-producing industries means that many young people are entering jobs with lower wages and benefits. In 1999, real entry-level wages for high school graduates were well below what they had been in the 1970s.[25] For a young man out of high school, entry-level hourly wages dropped 28.5 percent between 1979 and 1995. For a young woman high school graduate, the drop was 17.5 percent. Entry-level hourly wages for young men and women just out of college also declined between 1973 and 1995 but rose sharply in the economic boom after 1995 to a level only slightly higher than in 1973. Therefore, unlike the 1950s, most young people entering the adult world of employment today, most of whom are high school graduates, cannot afford to marry and establish separate families. In 1991 the average factory worker needed to work eighteen weeks to earn the closing costs on that Levittown house.[26] With the road to economic self-sufficiency longer and harder, economic independence has taken the place of marriage as evidence of having made the transition from youth to adulthood. Postponing marriage, reducing marital fertility rates, and shaping family life around two adult earners may make sense under these economic conditions.

Consequently, the average age at first marriage today is six years older than it was in the 1950s (but no older than it was in 1870) as young women and men attempt to establish themselves in jobs or gain more education before marrying: 25.1 years for women and 26.7 years for men. Yet, the average age for first sexual intercourse is 17.4 years for women and 16.9 years for men. Thus, young men and women spend on average eight to ten years between their first sexual activity and their entrance into marriage.[27]

3. *Differences by Race/Ethnicity and Economic Location*

While most U.S. families are experiencing economic stress, differences of geography, income level, and race/ethnicity result in different experiences of stress and different options. For example, many rural families experiencing deteriorating economic conditions for family farms have lost a way of family life. At the same time, rural areas are transformed into housing developments that increase urbanization and suburbanization for other families.[28]

Whether rural or urban, increased economic stress has its most devastating impact on low-income families. Since families of color are disproportionately represented among those who earn low-wages, they also are more harshly affected by the overall reduction of wages and benefits, as well as cyclical recessions. It is difficult to separate the impact of racism from the impact of socioeconomic disadvantage. Nonetheless, the reality of the effects of unequal racial privilege and disadvantage is clear:

- Unemployment Rates, Spring 2002[29]

9.6 percent persons of African-diasporan descent
7.1 percent Hispanic
4.9 percent White

- Poverty-Level Wages, 1999[30]

35.5 percent workers of African-diasporan descent
45.1 percent Hispanic workers
22.6 percent White workers

- Employer-Provided Health Insurance Coverage[31]

58 percent workers of African-diasporan descent
45 percent Hispanic workers
66 percent White

From 1979 to 1998, Hispanic workers suffered the sharpest drop in health insurance and pension coverage. Yet, the average hours worked by middle-income, married, adult persons with children, who are of African-diasporan or Hispanic descent, exceeded that of similar White families in 1979 as it does today. The impact of racism on the power to control and organize social resources for economic gain is starkly illustrated by the following comparison: "…in 1998, the average middle-income, married-couple African American family with children worked 489 more hours per year than a comparable white family in the same income range. That is, the middle-income black family worked 12 more weeks than the average white family in order to reach the middle-income ranks."[32] Similarly, most Korean immigrants, regardless of their professional education, begin small family businesses in the U.S. in which husbands, wives, and children work long hours for economic survival.[33]

4. *Economic Inequality*

Despite increasing educational levels in the U.S., economic resources became more unequally distributed in the last three decades. In fact, the U.S. now has historically high levels of income and wealth inequality, an inequality that surpasses all other modern industrialized nations (see Figures 1 and 2 below). In 1999, approximately 50 percent of the after-federal-tax income of U.S. families went to the bottom 80 percent of families while the other 50 percent went to the top 20 percent of families. In 1998, the wealthiest 1 percent of households controlled 38 percent of the nation's wealth while the bottom 90 percent of households owned 29 percent of the nation's wealth (see Figure 2 below).[34] In essence, since the 1950s there has been a shift in the distribution of productivity gains away from most workers and toward the wealthiest 20 percent of U.S. families. At the same time, there has been a significant retreat in government policies that once promoted education, family-formation, and home-ownership for young adults.

Figure 1
Distribution of Family Income, 1999[35]
(Upper limit of each 20%; in 1999 dollars)

Top 20% of families: Above $88	082
Fourth 20% of families: $88	082
Middle 20% of families: $59	400
Second 20% of families: $39	600
Lowest 20% of families: $22	826

Median family income in 1999: $48,950

Figure 2
Distribution of Household Wealth[36]
("Wealth" is defined as all household assets minus debts.)

% of household wealth held by	1962	1983	1998
Top 1%	33.4%	33.8%	38.1%
Top 20%	81.0%	81.3%	83.4%
Fourth 20%	13.4%	12.6%	11.9%
Middle 20%	5.4%	5.2%	4.5%
Second 20%	1.0%	1.2%	0.8%
Lowest 20%	-0.7%	-0.3%	-0.6%

5. *Marriage and Divorce*

Understanding the very different economic contexts in which families today find themselves may help us to understand other changes in the family. Today, within a forty-year period, almost half of first marriages end in divorce, as do more than half of second marriages.[37] This is a striking increase from the 1950s. But it is also more consistent with what has been a century-long pattern of gradually rising divorce rates disrupted only by the atypical decline in the 1950s. Evidence now suggests that the divorce rate may have plateaued around 1988, even falling slightly thereafter. However, the U.S. still has the highest divorce rate in the world.

On the other hand, people in the U.S. are not turning against marriage. Ninety percent marry; 70 percent of those divorced remarry. And U.S. couples who marry today actually have a better chance of celebrating their fortieth wedding anniversary together than did those who married a hundred years ago. This surprising reality, in the face of our divorce rate, is a result of greatly increased life expectancy. Marriages today are much less likely to be interrupted by death (in a forty-year period) than they were in previous centuries.

How are we to understand the U.S. divorce rate? Has divorce increased because the barriers to divorce have weakened, permitting women and men to more easily leave their marriages? Or have the barriers to divorce weakened because women and men are less willing to tolerate conflicted and unhappy marriages? There is no consensus among social scientists. Probably there is some truth in each perspective. It is certainly true that social acceptance of divorce has increased, changes in divorce laws have made divorce easier to obtain, and women's progress toward economic independence permits both men and women to consider leaving unhappy marriages.

Most research indicate that changes in gender expectations and roles caused by women's movement into wage labor do have an impact on marital accord as couples must renegotiate patterns of family life that once could be taken for granted.[38] Gender expectations are in a period of transition. But many of today's marriages continue to be sites of an imbalance of power and work responsibilities. Men are still the primary earners in most families and most women, even career women, experience marriage as a double shift. That is, women continue to have primary responsibility for children, other dependent persons, and domestic work while also being employed.[39] While people in the U.S. generally support the concept of gender equality in the workforce, more than 80% believe that "women are biologically better-suited to care for children." Almost 70 percent believe that everyone benefits

when women "take the main responsibility for the care of the home and children, while men take the main responsibility for supporting the family financially."[40] Full social equality for women, as envisioned by the General Assemblies of the PC(USA) and its antecedents, will require social changes that support women's opportunities to work in the public sphere while also supporting families' work of nurturance. But economic stress has pulled women into a workforce largely unprepared to treat all workers as parents and care givers. It is primarily women who are caught in the double bind.

Racial ethnic communities do not escape this tension. For example, while most wives in South Korea do not work outside the home, most married Korean women in the U.S. must in order to assure the economic survival of their families. Yet, many of these women would agree that it is best if a mother does not have to work for income. Consequently, Korean women in the U.S. are likely to work outside the home while holding more traditional gender beliefs. They also bear almost all the responsibility for household tasks since such work is not what men traditionally do in Korea. In the U.S., Korean men face the frustrations of not being able to support their families with their work alone, as is typical in Korea, as well as lost economic status. This clash of traditional Korean gender roles with economic reality in the U.S. may contribute to the higher rate of divorce among Korean women and men in the U.S. than in Korea.[41]

Similarly, White men's traditional "masculine" self-identity has been undermined by loss of wages and women's engagement in wage work. For two hundred years, the self-understanding of White men has revolved principally around providing income for the support of their families. As this identity wanes, some men respond by taking on more household tasks and creating more egalitarian relations. Others respond with an even greater emphasis on rigid gender roles. Consequently, most men, regardless of race/ethnicity, find that their gender roles and expectations are not the same as were their fathers'. [42]

Even though most women earn less that $25,000 annually, women's increased ability to support themselves economically allows women to consider divorce as a response to marital conflict and violence. According to the General Assembly policy statement, *Turn Mourning into Dancing!* "…we know that domestic violence is of epidemic proportions. … Domestic violence occurs in all types of family configurations and in every region of the United States, whether urban, suburban, or rural."[43] Anyone can be an abuser. However, where there is violence by one spouse or intimate partner against another, most of the victims are women and most of the abusers are men.[44] Where once churches emphasized women's responsibility to endure for the sake of the marriage, we now recognize the deep and long-lasting harm done to the victims of abuse and to those family members who witness abuse. Research based on post-divorce interviews indicates that violence and the threat of violence play a role in some women's decisions to leave a marriage.

Moreover, research also indicates that men and women have developed different standards by which they evaluate marriage today. With the availability of safe and effective birth control, marriage is no longer an automatic indication of a commitment to have and care for children. With or without children, women and men expect marriage to be companionate; that is, an emotionally satisfying relationship that provides for individual development in a context of relational security.[45] Some interpret this change in expectations as evidence of an increasingly secularized view of marriage—marriage as a contract based on self-interest—rather than marriage as a covenantal relationship. Others point out that the egalitarian assumptions that underlie the theological concept of covenant were not met by the unequal gender roles in traditional marriages. From this latter perspective, it may be that the full promise of marriage as a covenantal relationship among equals has not been lost, but still lies in our future.

Infidelity has long been acknowledged as a legitimate reason for divorce. Historically, however, a double standard (as well as economic dependency and social stigma) often counseled wives to look the other way when husbands had affairs and supported mistresses. It is, of course, extremely difficult to measure the prevalence of adultery. Current data suggests that about 50 percent of husbands and 30 percent of wives have had an affair in the course of their marriages. However, due to today's emphasis on the companionate marriage and gender equality, both women and men are much less willing to tolerate spousal infidelity. With monogamy still an important norm in marriage, adultery plays a role in higher divorce rates.[46]

A good deal of research substantiates the claim that economic deprivation increases marital conflict and the likelihood of divorce. Divorce rates are generally higher among lower income families and less educated people. They are higher for couples of African-diasporan descent than for White couples. Researchers point to the economic conditions that plague the daily life of low-income families: higher rates of unemployment, greater job instability in the face of downsizing, the stress of inadequate income, and the constant threat of destabilization with regard to housing, health care, transportation, and other needs.[47] Studies that look at the relationship between deteriorated economic contexts and marriage rates find that marriage rates drop when men experience high unemployment and low earnings.[48] Recent studies of the impact of welfare reform have found that when two-parent families are supported by a combination of work, income supplements, and work supports (childcare, transportation), they were almost 40 percent less likely to separate or divorce.[49]

Such socioeconomic and cultural trends may help us to understand why divorce rates have risen in the last half century, but they do not help us to understand the complexity that characterizes any particular relationship. We do know that the decision to divorce is not easily arrived at for most people. Studies show that divorce is typically the result of a painful disintegration of a shared vision of marriage and family that occurs over a long period of time. It is typically preceded by long periods of conflict between spouses and lonely isolation. In one study, half of the mothers thought about divorce for over five years before finally deciding to file for divorce.[50] On the other hand, research suggests that a substantial majority of couples in low-conflict marriages, who once considered divorce but decided to remain married, report very happy marriages five years later. This finding suggests that couples in low-conflict marriages can be helped to strengthen their relationships.[51]

We pray: Ever faithful and loving God who has never wavered in maintaining a covenant relationship with us despite our many violations and our repeated turning from you, teach us to be faithful. Help us to live in faithful relationships in our families and communities even as you have been everlastingly faithful with us. Grant us courage and strength to maintain our commitments, especially in hours of darkness and vulnerability.

Forgive us for turning the other way when people are hurting in their relationships, for telling ourselves it is not our concern. Help us to reach out to those in pain, conflict, and confusion, bringing love to all families in your name. Grant us the wisdom and commitment as communities of faith and as local communities to nourish and support our families in healthy covenant relationships that they may be strengthened in their resolve to be faithful to one another and to you, Almighty Redeemer. Amen.

6. *Divorce and Children*

Research literature on divorce indicates that concern for the well being of children is often a central issue for those contemplating divorce. The problem is that the pull of concern goes in both directions. Many parents try to sustain marriages "for the sake of the children." On the other hand, research shows the long-term negative consequences for children who experience consistent marital discord. Sometimes, "for the sake of the children" is a reason to divorce.[52] Today about half of U.S. children live with both of their biological parents, somewhat less than 20 percent live in a stepfamily, and about one in four lives with a single (typically divorced or separated) parent.[53] The remaining five percent live in other family situations.

The debate over the effects of divorce on children has recently been characterized as a debate between those who see the glass as half-full and those who see it as half-empty.[54] Contemporary social science research presents convincing evidence that, on average, children do better in healthy, intact two-parent families than they do in step-families, adopted families, or single-parent families (even when taking into account a variety of factors).[55] Specifically, 75–80 percent of children who have experienced divorce and 90 percent of children in intact families score within the normal range of achievement and adjustment. This leaves a significant 10–15 percent difference. Yet, it is also true that a large proportion of children who have experienced divorce scores higher on such tests than the average score from children in intact families. And a large proportion of children from intact families scores lower than the average score from children who have experienced divorce.[56] From the perspective of family researchers, the task is to identify the independent variables that cause the poorer performance of some children—somewhat more of whom are from single-parent, stepparent, or adoptive families.

Judith Wallerstein, known for her studies of children of divorce (on the glass half-empty side), points to three psychological factors that are protective for children of divorce as well as for children in intact families: reasonably harmonious and supportive relations between parents, the commitment and sensitivity of each parent to the child, and the maturity and morality of the parents. She writes:

> Within the well-functioning two-parent or one-parent family, these three protective aspects of family life come together to provide an environment that is conducive to the healthy development of child and adult alike, a human environment that continuously changes to support the ever-changing needs of all family members. [57]

Divorce, through its trajectory of pre-divorce conflict, the period of the actual break-up, and the post-divorce adjustments, may well assault the protective factors that children need at any point along this process. Wallerstein advocates flexibility in policy responses to divorcing families that reflects the needs of children at their various stages as well as the needs of differing types of couples. She suggests that "an appropriately used waiting period of one year" before finalizing a divorce could provide families the resources they need to shape divorce in ways that provide the protections children need.

Sara McLanahan's research, most often quoted to document that children in stepfamilies and single-parent families do less well than children in intact families, finds that about 50 percent of that 10–15 percent difference in outcome is due to income differences. That is, she concludes from her research that the single most important factor that accounts for the poorer well-being of some children in single-parent homes is less income. She attributes the bulk of the remaining difference to the effects of frequent residential moves that keep such families from establishing a stable community of friends and connections.[58] McLanahan has consistently argued that economic insecurity is the primary component in the disadvantages of single parenting. More recently, in a study of low-income, urban, unwed mothers, she found that "… unmarried parents and their children are families…." That is, they functioned as family units held together by emotional commitment, whether living together or not. Most of these couples hoped to marry in the future. However, they associated marriage with financial stability, something that neither could provide the other. McLanahan's conclusion is that such families need the support of social policies that lead to a level of economic self-sufficiency in which marriage becomes possible.[59]

A third family researcher (on the glass half-full side), Mavis Hetherington, agrees with the research that shows about twice as many children of divorced families having behavior problems as do children from intact families (the 20–25 percent compared to 10 percent noted above). But Hetherington also points out that there is a good deal of variability in how individuals respond to the experiences of marital transitions. For example, being caught in the middle of hostile parents or losing contact with the noncustodial parent can have significant negative effects on a child. With other family researchers, Hetherington approaches divorce not as a single event, but as a long process in which children begin to exhibit the same difficulties associated with divorce a year or more before a divorce actually occurs. Consequently the negative effects that have been associated solely with divorce may be, in fact, negative outcomes of disruptive behavior in married, but deteriorating, families.[60] Hetherington goes on to emphasize the positive meaning of the research: "…that 75–80 percent of kids from divorced families aren't having problems, that the vast majority are doing perfectly well."[61]

The question of the impact of divorce on children is a complicated one. Individual families differ and individual cases cannot be accounted for by aggregate data. Clearly, a warm, loving family of any form is a better environment for a child than a hostile, conflicted family of any form. The research on families seems to suggest that the vast majority of children of intact families and a lesser majority of children of single-parent families, step- or blended-families, and adoptive families are doing just fine. Consequently, church and social policies should not discriminate among these families, but support all such families equally.

7. *Stepfamilies*

Stepfamilies are created when one adult enters a relationship with another adult who is already a parent. Remarriage rates are high for divorced people: between 66–75 percent for women and between 70–80 percent for men. Consequently, about a third of the U.S. population is now step-somethings: stepparents, stepchildren, stepsiblings, and so forth. More than half will experience being a step-something during their life span. Yet, many of us have a negative reaction when we hear that term "step." Images of wicked stepmothers or abusive and

violent stepfathers are part of the stories so innocently shared with our children: Cinderella or Hansel and Gretel. In fact, some social scientists have argued that because stepparents do not have a genetic investment in stepchildren, they are less likely to provide essential social investments.[62]

These negative images are countered by using new terms, such as blended family. More importantly, as noted above, negative stereotypes are contradicted by research showing that most stepfamilies are doing well, most members of stepfamilies are satisfied with their stepfamily life, and differences in outcomes in comparison with families that have not experienced divorce (or death) are small. Ministry with stepfamilies should not begin, then, with negative assumptions; it should not reproduce social stigma. It should recognize that gender, parental, and extended family relationships within stepfamilies do not and cannot mirror the same patterns found in first-marriage families. Stepparent roles are more ambiguous; patterns of emotional attachment will be different. But different does not mean worse. Ministry that respects flexibility and diversity in family roles will be more effective in supporting stepfamilies as they find the differing conditions in which they can thrive.[63] Theologically, stepfamilies and adoptive families remind us that blood kinship, or genetic investment, does not define the boundaries of our capacities to love and care for one another.

8. *Cohabitation*

In the U.S. more than half of all first marriages formed in the 1990s began as cohabitation, half of all married stepfamilies began as cohabitation, and about half of the under 40 population has lived with an unmarried partner.[64] In 2000, according to the Census Bureau, cohabitating couples represented 3.7 percent of all U.S. households.[65] What is called "cohabitation" today is, of course, related to the not uncommon practice of informal marriage, self-marriage, or common-law marriage that was part of U.S. society in the past, particularly among poorer families and families living in isolated areas. Then, if couples looked and acted as though they were married, their communities and the courts tended to accept them as such. Today legal support for such relationships is more tenuous. Cohabitation is against the law in a few states. Most state courts will not provide the same property rights to cohabiting persons that married persons have without proof that the cohabiting persons had agreed to share property as though married.[66]

As the practice of cohabitation has recently increased, it has become a hotly debated topic. For example, the cause of the rise in cohabitation is unclear. Some researchers find it to be an alternative to marriage for some couples when marriage itself seems so risky. Others point out that for middle- and upper-income persons, it is often a testing ground for an anticipated marriage. Since low-income people have a greater likelihood of cohabiting, it may also serve, as it has in the past, as a hopeful prelude to marriage while couples work toward greater economic stability. In fact, studies show that cohabiting men who are higher earners, more educated, and employed full-time, are much more likely to marry their partners than are men with lower earnings.

However, it is also true that marriages preceded by cohabitation have much higher disruption rates than marriages without premarital cohabitation. Some researchers argue that this is significant proof that cohabitation is not good for the future success of marriage. Others point out that it is not cohabitation, per se, that is the cause of subsequent marital dissolution. Rather, when a variety of variables are taken into account (such as relational qualities, attitudes and values, and past family experiences), the disparity in marital divorce rates virtually disappears. For example, cohabiters with high marriage expectations have relational qualities similar to those of married couples.[67] The data may also reflect a self-selection factor in that those less committed to marriage may be more likely to enter cohabitation while those highly committed to marriage may be less likely to cohabit.[68]

While cohabitation has increased in the U.S., it is a far more pronounced trend both in Latin America and in Europe. Almost half the children born in Norway in 1999 were born to unwed parents. In Britain the figure was 38 percent, in France, 41 percent.[69] Faced with changing families, many European nations have developed social policies that provide all children with the same social protections and benefits regardless of the marital status of parents. In Sweden, for example, all references to the "illegitimacy" of children were dropped from legislation in 1917. One result of this approach is that child poverty rates in Europe are much lower than in the U.S. In fact, using the international standard measure, the U.S. has the highest child poverty rate of all modern, industrialized countries.[70]

9. *Single-Parent Families*

To many people the most troubling change in U.S. families has been the dramatic rise in single-parent families. While the increase is undeniable, statistical data may provide an overcount of single-parent families if the absence of marriage is in itself taken as an indicator of single-parenthood. As we have seen, there has been an increase in the practice of co-habitation. This makes it difficult to distinguish unmarried, intact two-parent families from single-parent ones. For example, in 1998, when about one-third of all births in the U.S. were to unmarried women, almost 40 percent of these births were to cohabiting couples, many of whom expressed their intention to marry in the future.[71] Similarly, when the number of years a child will spend in a single-parent family is compared to the number of years spent in a married couple family, the trend appears to be an increase in the years a child will spend in a single-parent family. However, when cohabiting couples are included, not just married couples, the number of years a child will spend in a single-parent family has actually been decreasing.[72] Still, it is estimated that about half of U.S. children will spend some of their childhood in a single-parent family.

Single parenting has several causes: death of a spouse, desertion of a spouse, divorce, and nonmarital childbearing. The vast majority of single parents are women (94 percent in 1998). In 2000, while about 9 percent of all households were single parent-families, they comprised 31 percent of all families with children under 18. According to the 2000 census, 35 percent of single-mother families were the result of divorce, 18 percent were the result of separation, 4 percent were the result of death, and 43 percent were the result of non-marital birth.[73]

Popular headlines cause most of us to believe that there has been an unprecedented explosion in unmarried childbirth: one-third of all births in 1998. Non-marital births have increased, but we need to put that increase into context. Again, there are problems of counting. In the past, unwed mothers were more likely to tell a census worker that they were separated. Today, some states still assume that a couple is unmarried if a woman's name differs from that of the father on the birth certificate. The Census Bureau itself estimated that a large majority of the statistical increase in unmarried births identified in the early 1980s was due to more refined survey procedures introduced at that time.[74] To determine if there has been an increase, and how much, also requires a comparison—compared to when? It may surprise us to learn that in the twenty years leading up to U.S. independence, one-third of the children born in Concord, Massachusetts, was conceived out of wedlock. [75] What has changed is that pregnancy, particularly an unintended one, no longer leads automatically to marriage. Cohabiting and single parenting are modern options.

Similarly, we need to keep in mind the distinction between the rate of births to unmarried women and the proportion of births to unmarried women. Rate measures the number of unmarried births per one thousand women in a given year. Proportion is the percentage of all births that are to unmarried women. This latter figure is impacted by the increase or decrease in marital fertility. It is possible, then, for a nonmarital birth rate to fall but for the proportion of nonmarital births to increase. In fact, this is the case for 1994–2000. The birth rate for unmarried women in the U.S. fell from 46.9 (per one thousand women) to 45.2. However, the percent of all births that were to unmarried women actually rose slightly, from 32.6 percent to 33.2 percent, reflecting a decrease in marital births. Moreover, the declining non-marital birth rate hides another phenomenon: a rising non-marital birth rate for White and Hispanic women in their 20s.

The teen birth rate has also declined steadily from 1991 to 2000 reaching a record low of 48.7 births per 1,000 women 15–19 (see Figure 3 below).[76] It is much lower today than it was in 1960. For example, in 1960 the teen birth rate for women 18–19 years old was 166.7 per 1000. Today it is 79.5. In addition, the actual number of births to teens has declined 10 percent since 1991 (see Figure 4 below). But teenaged women are much less likely to be married today. The marital teen (15–19) birth rate in 1960 was 531 per 1,000 women; today it is 311. The nonmarital birth rate was 15 in 1960; today it is 40 (see Figure 5 below). Again, it is not that there are more "babies having babies," but that social values in the 1950s expected pregnant teenaged women to leave school and get married.

Figure 3
The Falling Teen Birth Rate[77]
(Births per 1,000 females aged 15-19)

1960	1970	1980	1990	1995	2000
89.1	68.3	53.0	59.9	56.8	48.7

Figure 4
The Declining Number of Births to Females Under Age 20

1960	1970	1980	1990	1995	2000
593,746	656,460	562,330	533,591	512,115	479,067

Figure 5
Falling Marital and Rising Non-Marital Teen Birth Rates
(Marital or non-marital births per 1,000 Females, Ages 15-19)

	1960	1970	1980	1990	1999
Marital	531	444	350	420	311
Non-Marital	22	26	29 44	44	

However, despite these downward trends, the U.S. continues to have one of the highest teen pregnancy rates and teen birth rates among all of the developed countries. This is true for the pregnancy and birth rates of White teens, teens of African-diasporan descent, and Hispanic teens. One thing that most teen mothers have in common, whether in the U.S. or in Europe, is poverty. In the U.S. more than 80 percent of the teenaged women who become mothers are living in poverty, or in near-poverty, before they become pregnant. Kristin Luker, citing the report of the National Academy of Science, *Risking the Future*, concludes that "at every step of the process that leads to early childbearing, social and economic disadvantage plays a powerful role. Poor kids, not rich ones, have babies as teenagers, and their poverty long predates their pregnancy."[78] A partial explanation for these high rates of teen pregnancy and birth in the U.S., then, is that the proportion of the U.S. population that is poor is significantly larger (at least two-thirds larger) than that of other developed nations.[79] Another part of the explanation is that the use of effective contraceptives by sexually active teenage women is lower in the U.S. than in other developed countries.[80] Thus, as economic forces drive middle- and upper-income young people to postpone marriage and parenting in order to aim for more education, social mobility, and professional advancement, early childbearing is increasingly a characteristic of the poor. Today, U.S. society seems conflicted over its response to, and responsibility for, our young people who face a lengthening period of years, typically characterized by sexual activity, before obtaining the economic security that supports marriage. This ambivalence is particularly destructive for poor young people, particularly racial/ethnic minorities, who do not have the same access to health care, health insurance, education, and networks for social mobility.

As noted above, most single-parent families do as well as married-couple families in terms of measurable outcomes for children. We know that poverty plays a significant role in explaining the 10–15 percent of children with worse than average outcomes. And while the poverty rate for single-mother families has declined since 1960, it is still much higher than for other family types (35.7 percent in 1999). Why are single-mother parents disproportionately represented among the poor? The first reason is the most obvious: only one employable adult in the family at a time when most families need to be supported by two. The lack of affordable and accessible childcare and transportation further limits opportunities for single mothers to do income producing work as well as the work of parenting. But even when single mothers are employed, they face the same work issues that all women face. The type of work they are prepared for and the type of work available to them often do not raise a family out of poverty. In 1998, 58 percent of the single mothers who received any welfare assistance also worked. Of those who worked full-time in 1998, almost 40 percent earned poverty-level wages.[81] In 1993, more than 70 percent of working single mothers were in female-identified, service occupations that are typically low-wage, no benefit jobs.[82] Concern for low-income mothers and their children calls for increased support and care through church ministries and public policies. However, good social policy must remember that almost half of all low-

income families in 1999 were married-couple families and about 47 percent of low-income children live with married parents. In itself, marriage does not solve the problem of poverty. [83]

10. *Same-Sex Families*

Presbyterians hold starkly different views with regard to same-sex families. Some have plainly said, "We need to broaden our scope—to support same sex relationships…." Others just as plainly said, "Compassion to me means loving a homosexual person as a person but not condoning the lifestyle." Still others seemed to recognize both the reality of same-sex families and their own reluctance to accept them by saying, "We are not ready to condone same-sex marriages."

In response, just as with other forms of family, it is important that we acknowledge what the social sciences can tell us at this point. From the studies conducted over the past twenty years, no significant differences have been found between children reared by homosexual parents and children reared by a traditional set of heterosexual parents. A recent review of the existing studies by sociologists Judith Stacey and Timothy J. Biblarz has concluded that some slight differences exist in attitudes and behaviors. Children of same-sex families were less likely to hold to traditional gender stereotypes regarding behavior and roles. They were emotionally close to their parents, regardless of biological relationship, and also tended to be more expressive of their feelings. [84] Due to this research, both the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Psychological Association support gay and lesbian parenting. Despite lack of agreement among Presbyterians regarding same-sex families, children of such couples need the same advocacy, protection, and respect that we encourage for all other children. The children of same-sex couples must not be harmed by our lack of agreement.

11. *Summary*

Social science data shows that there is no predominant family form in the U.S. The proportion of families represented by any single form is in flux. While shifts in family forms are not new, today's generations have been living through a period of rapid transition related to specific economic forces, demographic changes, and changing social attitudes. Below we chart these changes in family forms. (Please note that these charts are using Census Bureau definitions that may not reflect the understandings of a community of faith.)

Changing Family Forms: (% of all households) [85]	1970	2000
Family Households	81.2%	68.5%
Married couple with own children	40.3%	24.1%
Married couple without own children	30.3%	28.7%
Single Mothers (children under 18)	4.6%	7.0%
Single Fathers (children under 18)	<1.0 %	1.7%
Other Family Households	5.0%	7.0%
Nonfamily Households	18.8%	31.2%
Men living alone	5.6%	10.7%
Women living alone	11.5%	14.8%
Non-Family Households (includes unrelated persons and cohabitation)	1.7%	5.7%

Changing Family Forms: (% of all families with own children)		
Married couple	87%	69%
Single mother	12%	26%
Single father	1%	5%

We pray: O God whose infinite splendor is reflected in the immense variety of your created world, we give you thanks for the many ways in which families have shaped themselves to care for one another. We also give

thanks for the great variety of ways your congregations minister to the diverse needs of families in their communities. Help us, as congregations, to celebrate and support your love wherever caring is found in families.

In a society that values personal fulfillment and individual rights over interdependence and care giving, help us learn how to give primary place in our lives to caring for one another in your name. As members of families, called both to give and receive, grant us the gratitude to value the unique contributions each of us makes to family life, and the wisdom to discern when to place the needs of others before ourselves and when to receive nurturing so that we might in turn be of service to others. Amen.

D. *Cultural Context*

1. *Life Cycles and Life Crises*

The large-scale social and cultural changes that have so profoundly shaped family life in recent times must not be allowed to obscure the fact that other kinds of changes are normal and universal in family experience. In modern societies families still serve as a central institution for most people as they move through life's stages. Families are typically the first and last source of support for individuals. At their best they provide the first experience of unconditional love and acceptance, the first place where individuals practice the virtues of both independence and interdependence and develop the capacity for responsible relation to self and others. Yet, at different stages of life people are bonded with one another differently as their needs, interests and capacities change. Some of these changes are related to the life cycle development of individual family members. Family experience at any given time is profoundly shaped by how the developmental needs and issues of its members interact. Every family changes over time as its members mature and age in various interacting patterns. For these reasons most family researchers believe it is possible to identify typical life cycle patterns in families.[86] Families also experience change in less predictable and continuous ways through the impact of crisis experiences: illness, bereavement, estrangement, divorce, unemployment, discrimination, substance abuse, crime, victimization, and many other disruptive events. Today, there are many configurations of people who lovingly bond as family in difficult situations. These include mutually adoptive families (where older youth who are homeless or from dysfunctional families are blended in by non-kin); organization-adopted families (in which a congregation as a whole, a community organization or individual mentors become family to youth who are resettled refugees or who cannot live at home); shared parenting (in which a parent away at college or career visits with the other parent and child when possible); and grandparents rearing grandchildren. Few other human relationships are as affected as families are by the intimacy that bearing life's joys and burdens together creates.

However, at times of crisis, all families, regardless of family form or the cause of the crisis, should expect to find the support, solace, and encouragement of the Christian faith through the ministries of the church. "…a congregation grounded in Christ and being transformed through faith and discipleship is defined as a community in which, among other things, its members care for one another." [87] As Paul taught the Christians in Galatia: "Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2, NRSV). Caregiving is a fundamental expression of the commitment and love with which Christians serve one another beyond biological ties and express the inclusive compassion of God. Yet, both universal experiences of change and unanticipated events occur in particular social and cultural contexts. Cultures organize these events socially, interpret them, and guide individuals and families through them. This is the "cultural context" that shapes the intersection of family and congregational life. Thus, in formulating church policies for "changing families," it is necessary to take into account how the particular features of U.S. culture, particularly the values and meanings that predominate in our society, structure and influence families' experiences of change and crisis and the church's response.

Much has been written about the impact of U.S. culture on the family, and much of this literature raises disturbing issues. The U.S. values of self-sufficiency, respect for the privacy of others, and individualism may cause those in need to be unwilling to turn to their church for help. These values, as well as the impact of job mobility and time stress, may make church members uncomfortable with and resistant to calling on those in need of care. Consequently, care needs, especially long-term needs, are being met more and more by commercial providers while more forms of congregational care giving are relegated to the paid staff of the church. When this happens, congregational affirmations of love and faithfulness may seem hollow. As communities grounded in the

love of God, congregations must struggle to resist the values and social forces that isolate people from one another and that depersonalize care:

> God calls people to faith and community. Responding to God in love requires responding to God's children in love. Congregations in most instances are not gifted to meet all the needs of a member or family in crisis. But, without exception, congregations are gifted to be a sustaining presence in solidarity with broken people, bearing their burdens with them. There is hope for care giving among God's people because God continues to sustain the community called church.[88]

We pray: O God, the True Center of all community, may we, as a community of faith, be willing to examine the ways we neglect our responsibilities to your daughters and sons and to their families. Forgive us and help us to amend our ways. Help us to make our churches once again the moral and spiritual centers of our neighborhoods, creating healing life for all families in your name.

2. *U.S. Cultural Values*

a. *Materialism*

All U.S. families experience the enormous and pervasive impact of materialistic values on family life. Materialism is a pervasive cultural belief system in which the accumulation of material things is given ultimate value, defining individual and family success. Materialism shapes what people think is important, how we spend our time as well as our money, how we frame the goals of our lives, and how we judge the value of other persons. The pressure to be "successful" in the sense of achieving material symbols of economic success, or of providing ever-increasing material benefits to one's family and children, is often overbearing. Many families, while well off by the standards of the world and even of this society, struggle to keep pace as more products and services become part, often a necessary part, of middle- and upper-income U.S. lifestyles. Parents realize that doors open to their children depending on parents' abilities to afford lessons, equipment, and practice time for activities that become sources of community, of belonging, for children. Families in stigmatized groups are tempted to buy social acceptance by buying status-identified products.

In a materialistic culture, no upper limit to the accumulation of things is recognized. One never has all that one "needs." Moreover, "needs" expand due to both technological advancements and the necessary drive of capitalism to constantly produce and sell new products. Where once a typewriter was sufficient, now high-speed Internet connections for computers are a necessity. Where once children shared beds, now houses are built to accommodate individual bedrooms and baths for each member. Where a vacant lot once served every season's sport, now scheduled participation in leagues is purchased along with the correct sport-specific attire.

Certainly there is much to celebrate in the inventions and material progress we enjoy. Few of us would want to do without modern conveniences or progress in healthcare, for example. What is troubling about a materialistic culture, however, is that what is good and meaningful in life becomes dependent on the accumulation of material products. "Success" and the determination of who is successful are measured by market values: income, wealth, and access to economic and political power. Materialism draws families into a narrow and self-focused value system. While we may not agree with everything in his list, Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer put it well:

> …we would all do well to assess our conduct in relation to values. If we did so honestly, I think it would become apparent that in our society things are more valued than relationships; money beyond essential needs is valued more than time with our children; ideological certainty more than diversity; individualism more than community; career more than family time; distorted masculinity more than peace in our homes and in our society; bombs more than schools; affluence isolated amid suburbs, gated communities, and guard dogs more than shared wealth and safer cities; and, perhaps most important, excessive consumption for some of our citizens is cherished more than social equality, the health of the environment, or the well-being of future generations." [89]

As Nelson-Pallmeyer indicates, the negative effects of materialism are several. Materialism tends to overshadow the important interpersonal values embedded in relationships based on care, love, mutuality, and loyalty. It can draw families away from cultivating among themselves and their children the values and pleasures that come from a non-utilitarian love of one another, community, knowledge, the arts, and even work. Materialism also denies the social mandate of our faith that is rooted in God's gracious love for all of God's children: a divine love that is expressed in our redemption and in God's passion for social justice. We confess

God's claim on us to be those who will embody the image of this God in the way we live and relate to all others. But materialism may cause us to neglect what John Calvin called the "rule of love" for both neighbors and enemies that leads to the "rule of moderation" in which we practice a self-giving commitment for a common good. [90]

Good middle- and upper-income families wrestle with achieving a balance between what is necessary and what is enough; they wrestle with when to say "no" when cost is not at issue. But, as Nelson-Pallmeyer described, the crisis of affluent families goes deeper. It is a crisis that is spiritual and relational. Materialism sets before us false goals and false gods. It calls us to give our lives to work that rewards us with the power to own more things and gain more social status. It does not ask, nor does it want us to ask, the value of our work to the real needs of all families, communities, and the environment. Thus, materialism may lead some families into an excess of things, over-consumption, in contrast to the virtue of frugality that Calvin taught. Frugality does not mean a devaluing of material goods. It is not a form of asceticism. On the contrary, frugality values the earth and all the material goods necessary for human fulfillment. However, it is a valuing rooted in God's love for all. Therefore:

> Frugality denotes moderation, temperance, thrift, cost-consciousness, efficient usage, and a satisfaction with material sufficiency—similar to the "contentment" celebrated in the first letter to Timothy (6:6-10). As a norm for the economic activity of both individuals and societies, frugality means morally disciplined production and consumption for higher ends, such as the common good.[91]

Materialism may also distort our sense of time. Time is money, we are told. So there is little time for parents to discern and teach their own values, values that may run counter to those of a materialistic culture and economy. There is no time for the unproductive work of being with children "wasting time." There is little time for being neighborly or engaging in local, democratic, community building. When time is money the time required for significant care giving of dependent others or the time required for responsible citizenship takes valued time out of the workplace. The needs of children, families, and community are, simply put, too expensive when time is money. Today in the U.S., the time needed to care for children, the elderly, other dependent persons, and our intimate relationships receives little social support. Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Cornel West lament this loss of social support for the important work of parents. Their comments could also be extended to apply to families caring for any type of dependent person.

> More than any other wealthy nation, America expects individual parents to foot the child-raising bill from childbirth all the way through college, and more than any other wealthy nation, America is facing profound and systemic child neglect. … In an age that venerates the market, relying solely on parental altruism to underwrite the costs of raising children is risky for the nation and cruel for the child. Try as they undoubtedly do, millions of contemporary parents are simply too stretched and squeezed to do a stellar job. [92]

While job insecurity, inadequate wages, decreased corporate loyalty to employees, soaring compensation for executives, diminished health, vacation, and retirement benefits for employees, increasing job mobility, and mandatory over-time create immense time pressures and emotional stress on all types of families, many other U.S. families, as we have seen, struggle to provide the bare minimum of shelter and sustenance for their members through long work hours, often at more than one job and in odd hours. A culture of materialism, by ignoring the balance Christians seek between over-consumption by some and the deprivation of others, threatens the human development and well-being of many people living on earth today as well as the many more who will be born into a depleted earth. The growth of inequality in income and wealth in the U.S. fragments our communities and our churches, divides our families, and diminishes our capacity as children of God to be stewards of the common good. Thus, a culture of materialism threatens our very relationship with God who is the source of all things. Consequently, the 1981 statement, "The Power to Speak Truth to Power," adopted by the General Assemblies of both the Presbyterian Church in the United States and the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., states in part: "God calls Christians living in affluence to develop a lifestyle of frugality which assists human fulfillment while releasing scarce resources for use by the poor."[93] The 208th General Assembly (1996) also reaffirmed the church's commitment to the essential economic virtue of frugality in its statement, *Hope for a Global Future: Toward Just and Sustainable Human Development*, giving this mandate to all Presbyterians and other Christians:

> …to lead the way to a basic reconception of the "good life," one that, in accordance with our Christian and Reformation heritage, is less materialistic and more frugal. The good life finds fulfillment through the abundance of genuinely caring and mutually supportive community in Christ, and through adventurous faithfulness in response to God's call to restore creation, and discover the contemporary meaning of doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with our God (Micah 6:8, NRSV)." [94]

b. *Consumerism*

Consumerism is one of the products of a materialistic culture. In consumerism individuals and families come to understand themselves, and their purpose in life, primarily as buyers. We live to buy; we work to buy; we educate to enhance purchasing power. Leisure is often characterized by the pleasure of buying. Going to shopping malls has become a major source of entertainment. The negative impact of consumerism causes people to focus our sense of self around material consumption for ourselves and our own nuclear family. It reduces our understanding of human freedom to a sense of personal freedom exercised by choosing what to consume based on what we believe to be personal preferences. Even our sense of responsibility for others is too often met through purchases. Expressions of love between family members, as well as care for others are too easily reduced to the purchase of things or services.

Consumerism, in particular, and materialism, in general, are undeniably promoted and shaped in profound and pervasive ways by mass media: TV, radio, film, videos, music, and the Internet. Families are barraged daily with the message of consumption through commercial advertising, including billboards, school, TV and Internet connections, park benches, and even clothing. Mass marketing encourages people to believe that our personal value depends on buying the right products. It presents consumer goods and expensive activities as replacements for time spent together as a family so that, even in leisure, family members are pulled in separate directions. Christian ethicist Larry Rasmussen speaks about the loss of what he calls "manifold engagement." This is the relational aspect of routine activities family members once did together: cutting the grass, preparing meals, playing neighborhood-lot baseball, pursuing hobbies, visiting neighbors and friends, giving a helping hand, and so forth. Through these activities families practice the skills of human relationship. From a Christian perspective, these are the routine family activities in which family members model and practice the Christian virtues of hospitality, care for the least, compassion, the valuing of every person, sensitivity to the needs of others, and passion for social justice. Through manifold engagement the Christian family, first rooted in the gathering of Christian community, hones Christian character. [95]

Consequently, Christians cannot be defined as consumers. We are first daughters and sons of God, redeemed by God's love, and called to participate in the building of God's realm on earth. When we consume, then, we consume as children of a creating God who, having provided all the resources necessary for abundant life, intends that they be used to meet the needs of all God's children while honoring the capacity of the earth to renew itself for future generations.[96]

c. *Individualism*

The U.S. culture highly values individualism, personal independence, private property rights, and individual privacy—values that can stand in some tension with biblical concepts of a covenant community living in response to the gracious gifts given for all by a generous Creator. When individualism is understood as respect and concern for the well being of each person in all forms of relationships, it reflects the biblical principle of God's equal love for each. In contrast to many other cultures, however, the predominant U.S. culture treats the individual as the primary social unit rather than emphasizing the prior ties of kinship and community. This stress on the autonomy of individuals is often expressed through the U.S. focus on the primacy of private property rights over community claims to a common good. Therefore, U.S. culture and its economic and social policies often promote a concept of autonomous individualism that functions to fragment rather than strengthen families and communities. When individual rights are primary, communities and families are viewed as providers of services to this autonomous, self-interested individual, rather than as interdependent social units within which an individualized human character is formed. Family members may be treated as isolated individuals by employers, schools, social services, and even churches rather than as interdependent members of a family and community.

The stress on individualism has had a particularly devastating impact on racial ethnic communities that practice different, group-based values. For example, in its report, "Family Preservation: Concepts in American Indian Communities," the National Indian Child Welfare Association finds that the White value system promoting nuclear families and individualism has fostered repression of native cultures. It has resulted in the implementation of policy that "fuels identity crises, family dysfunction, and community disintegration." According to this report, Indian cultures "do not separate individuals from family or family from community; community, tribal custom,

language, religion, and cultural practice are fundamental to family preservation." However, these community-oriented values "were identified as flagrant forms of socialism" and "the nuclear family lifestyle and an ethos of individualism were forcibly imposed in the effort to civilize Indians."[97]

An Hispanic Presbyterian wrote: "One of the few things that unite all Hispanic/Latin people (from all over—from all walks of life) is the strong belief in the family ties. However, we are losing those ties because of the values promoted by the broader society where we now live."[98] Her firsthand knowledge is supported by recent census data related to Hispanic immigrant families. These data "…consistently indicate patterns of low rates of divorce and of single-parent families in the first (immigrant) generation but striking increases in the prevalence of marital disruption over time in the United States and particularly in succeeding generations…."[99] Immigrants from Korea find that their children absorb the U.S. culture and do not understand the Korean culture's emphasis on "filial piety" in which children are reared to have a sense of devotion to and obligation for their parents. Instead, as these children become adults, they may tend to "maintain relations with their elderly parents on a more or less equal and voluntary basis…"[100]

For better or worse, the strong sense of individual freedom that pervades U.S. culture also enables persons to marry across cultural and religious lines without feeling constrained to remain within the traditions of their birth family. Consequently, the number of interfaith families is growing. They often experience both the richness of new discovery and the stress of conflicting norms and assumptions. Rearing children in interfaith families creates difficult decisions regarding whose tradition will be carried into the future. Some families attempt to rear children with dual religious identities, while others attempt to avoid conflict by raising their children without any religious affiliation. Both responses may be problematic to the spiritual growth of children. To the extent that some persons enter an interfaith marriage with the intention to seek the conversion of a spouse, the positive value of individualism—that is, the valuing of each person and their response to God's activity in their life—is undermined and violated.[101] For these and other reasons, many communities of faith regard interfaith marriages as, at least, problematic, possibly causing religious syncretism, and, potentially, destructive of an individual's faithful adherence to their religious tradition. Presbyterians need to be aware of the attitudes of other religious traditions and of the possibilities and problems of such relationships before entering into or officiating at interfaith marriages.

Even within the White tradition, many have raised growing concerns about the impact of individualism on families, communities, and the future of a democratic society. The now classic research into the White, middle-class, *Habits of the Heart*, found individuals who "…had no grounds for moral commitments beyond self-referential ones, no strong moral reference points or authorities beyond their own small therapeutic selves and the pain, often depression, those self-absorbed entities seemed endlessly to recycle."[102] Rasmussen describes what he calls "the middle-class child's cultural catechism" as "Gather to yourself all you can—experience, knowledge, goods, skills. Make your own world, as you see fit, and enjoy. Grow for all your worth, in every way. Never close off any options."[103] As a mantra of self-reliance, a denial of interdependence, and a fear of dependence, this individualism is destructive of persons, families, and communities. It understands human freedom primarily as a right to be left alone, to be free from the needs and desires of others. It strips justice of any substance, limiting it to those procedures that protect the rights and private property of individuals. An overemphasis on individualism relinquishes social responsibility for significant issues that frame the quality of national life. It constantly works to reduce what used to be called a "social wage"; that is, the share of national resources distributed according to the needs of human community rather than by market forces (for example, public education, parks, transportation, and museums, and the social support of basic economic necessities). It reduces social morality to individual politeness.

The spirit of individualism in U.S. culture (as distinguished from the religious value of individuality and the absolute value of each person) weakens understanding and appreciation of the important ways in which human life, in families and communities, is inevitably interdependent. It also weakens the valuable place that true forms of dependency and interdependency play in human relations. Everyone arrives in this world totally dependent. All of us will experience additional times of dependency throughout our lives, especially in our later years. The continuation of generations depends upon this flow of giving and receiving care. Therefore, contempt for the positive and essential roles that dependency and interdependency play in family and community life contributes to their fragmentation. At the same time, individualism weakens public support for the kinds of services, resources,

and public policies that families and communities need to resist these fragmenting pressures. Christian ethicist Emilie Townes characterizes this as the error of "stressing personal responsibility while detesting dependency." She points out that from the perspective of dispossessed communities, "…the notion of uninhibited personal freedom remains a utopian folly." Social policies that focus on individual responsibility while detesting the shared responsibilities of society "belie a basic inability or unwillingness to recognize structural sins and/or inequalities…."[104] The mantra of individualism serves to hide from us our essential connectedness with others, those close to us and visible, as well as those affected by our choices whom we never see.

Once again the media, in all its forms, plays a significant role in shaping perspectives on human relationships: family, marriage, partnering, parenting, and social responsibility. Yet, much of what the media portrays about relationships is trivializing or outright hostile. Fathers may be characterized as ridiculous and incompetent; mothers as inept and emotional. Marriage is both romanticized as totally fulfilling life's purpose and treated with contempt through routine portrayals of dysfunctional and manipulative behaviors in which each individual pursues his or her personal agenda. Casual sexual encounters are presented as the norm of adult sexuality; sexual activity is presented as the obsession of every adult life. Children cannot easily be protected from a daily consumption of distorted relations and hyper-individualism, consumerism, materialistic values and gratuitous violence that is clearly inappropriate and may be developmentally harmful for some children at certain ages. Parental efforts to limit TV and Internet access at home exercise only partial control over a market-driven popular culture in which mass marketed images appear everywhere. Concerns about the influence of media on families are reflected in long-standing positions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Specifically, the PC(USA) stands opposed to censorship and strongly supports the rights protected by the First Amendment. However, it also calls upon Presbyterians to develop strategies by which to condemn false values communicated through media and to influence what media present.[105]

3. *Church and Culture*

The church itself may unwittingly contribute to the fragmentation of families and communities in its own life and witness. When church practices and programs are primarily defined by age or gender, for example, the church appears to be replicating the popular culture's fragmentation of family members into individual consumers. In contrast, all church members need a variety of ways to build and sustain their identity with the whole family of God. For example, children need to see that adults worship and to join them in worship. Adults need to bridge separations by age, gender, race, income, and family form that mirror contemporary social inequalities. Additionally, church programs may unintentionally serve the needs of certain forms of families over others. Families with special needs, families caring for dependent adults, families of children with disabilities, inter-faith families, single people who live alone, couples with children and couples without children—all need intentional practices that support, include, and value them as family. Ronald Peters suggests that the analogy of the extended family, long practiced in communities of African-diasporan descent, could serve as a paradigm for local congregations. In their ministries with families and communities facing oppressive realities, the churches of these communities ministered as a "helping institution sociologically, particularly in the areas of caring, education, nurture, economic development, political thought, as well as religious instruction." Peters argues that Jesus' response to family was to extend relational connections beyond blood and legal relations to include all who do God's will, exercising inclusiveness across social divisions. As extended family, the church does not divide life into sacred and secular spaces, but "is inherently holistic in its approach to reality."[106]

In summary, the gravest danger that faces all U.S. Christians is the extent to which U.S. values of materialism, consumerism, and individualism shape our theologies, biblical studies, ethics, and liturgical practices. Cultural values can be easily absorbed into our teachings and the daily practices of our church organizations, as well as in our times of worship. What do our organizational and liturgical practices communicate? To what extent do those cultural values that have served to divide us by race, gender, physical and mental abilities and economic location also continue to divide the church family? The church does not exist as an end in itself. It is not a substitute community for the lack of community in U.S. society. Nor is it a haven for stressed people and their families. The church exists as a community of alternative practices that arise out of a different account of the meaning and purposes of human life. It exists as a family of faith called into being by God to form "the people of the Way." It does not exist to serve our particular families, but to form our families, in all

of their diversity, for journeying in "the Way." The role of the church is always to live as Jesus lived—as though God reigned and no other power is relevant. As it was written:

> He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Luke 4:17b–19, NRSV)

As the pace of life reaches new heights of speed and complexity, new levels of rapid consumption, and greater gaps between those with the means for leisure and those without the means for daily bread, the church—to be the church—must rediscover and newly proclaim the grace of the Sabbath gift. [107] In God's creation of a day of rest, the greedy nature of human work to expand its purposes into every minute of every day is capped. As John Calvin said simply, "On the Sabbath, we cease our work so God can do God's work with us."[108] On Sabbath we are to become quiet to remember that we are not our own, that our life is not our own, that our possessions are not our own, that even our families are not our own. Being God's, we learn to live in a world that is God's among people who are God's. When we receive Sabbath grace, we become prepared to walk as People of the Way even when that Way sets us apart from the values of our culture. In reclaiming the meaning of the Sabbath gift, the church reclaims time and space for twenty-first century U.S. Christians. It becomes a fountain of alternative values flowing from communion with the living God: reclaiming rest for exhausted families, opening lives to God's purposes, breathing thankfulness, and expanding prophetically our capacity to love beyond our own. When the church is the church, Christian families of every form are known by the transforming power of their practices.

We pray: Ever-loving Savior, who comes to us in our brokenness and transforms our lives through healing mercy, we confess to you that our nation is not always a healthy place for many of your families. Too often we have erred and gone astray following after false cultural idols that whisper to us of security and success. Too often we have not encouraged our families to dare to place the values of your Gospel above those of the popular culture. Too often, when we as a church could have spoken your prophetic word and acted your redeeming deed in this society, we have instead sat silent and frozen, not daring to speak out against popular opinion.

Forgive us, Redeeming Lord, and re-new our vision. Grant us the courage to place you and your love at the core of our family lives, at the center of our communities and of our nation. Redeem us, as we even now confess our sins to you, that we may live with peace and justice for all families and shed the light of your healing love upon the brokenness of this world. Amen.

Theological Foundations

A. *Biblical Background*

1. Hebrew Families

Anthropologists tell us that no one form of "family" is universal. Surely the Bible is a witness to the complex nature and diverse forms of families. During the long period of biblical history, families lived in vastly different political, social, and environmental contexts. These contexts impact the development of culture and, thus, greatly influence lives, relationships, and the nature and form of families. Initially biblical families wandered as desert tribes. Later they lived in slavery in Egypt, were emancipated and became an agricultural society. They organized a monarchy and added an urban setting. Later still they emigrated to exile in Babylon. Though records of family life are sketchy and limited to the upper class, the great socioeconomic changes that occurred between the periods of governance by judges, governance by kings, and subjugation to foreign powers must have had an impact on family organization and life. To imagine that families were all the same and remained the same in the face of the immense social, economic, and political changes occurring in the ancient Near East over a period of time that stretched thousands of years would be akin to comparing chariots to computers.

Most of us are likely to hold in our minds an image of some typical biblical family. In fact, however, no single model predominates. By one scholar's estimate as many as forty different family forms can be found in the Hebrew Bible alone.[109] These forms were diverse. They included what we would now describe as a tribal patriarchal family such as Abraham's, which included 318 men, as well as women and children (Gen. 14:14).

Polygamous marriage (Esth.2:3) and concubinage were common for affluent men. There were interracial/intercultural marriages. The stories of Solomon and his wives and Esther and Ahasuerus depict relations between the people of Israel and those of the cultures and religions in their environment. The Ezra-Nehemiah tradition depicts Israelites being forced to divorce non-Israelite spouses in order to protect Israel's religious identity (Ezra 9, 10; Neh. 13). Yet, this tradition was balanced in the same period by the story of Ruth of Moab and Boaz of Israel (Ruth 4:9-10). Here God blesses Israel through the inclusion of an outsider. Biblical families also include female-headed extended families, such as Rahab and her household (Josh. 6:17, 25); adoptive families of various configurations (Gen. 15–16); a widow living with her parents, such as Orpah (Ruth 1:8; 14–15); incestuous families (Gen.19:31–38); and cohabitation without marriage, such as Samson and Delilah (Judg.16:4).

Even where there are apparent similarities between Hebrew families and contemporary families, however, cultural differences are significant and we must be extremely careful not to limit our interpretation of biblical texts to our own historical and ethnocentric perspectives. For example, when we use the word "family," we usually mean the contemporary U.S. "family" typically composed of a small number of people (an average today of 2.63 people) related by marriage or blood or adoption who live together and share resources. However, the primary social unit of Israelite society was the Hebrew household or "house of the father." Smaller than the clan or tribe, it corresponds more closely to our use of the word for family when we mean "all of our kin." Thus, it is more accurately translated "household." The Hebrew agrarian household was a large, interdependent economic and social unit that ranged from fifty to one hundred people and consisted of all the descendents of the living patriarch except for married daughters. This large kinship group "might live together in a cluster of houses, sharing common courtyards and cooking facilities."[110] It was the basic unit of society through which social order was maintained, including judicial and military functions. Thus, while in modern societies private family matters and public activities are considered quite distinct, in biblical societies they are indistinguishable. It is in this sense that it can be said that rearing children was a community function. In fact, the Shema' enjoins the entire Hebrew community to take responsibility for teaching the commandments to the next generation.

> Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children . . . . (Deut. 6:4-7, NRSV).

Consequently, personal identity was collective and not highly individualized in the contemporary sense: "who I am" was understood to mean "to whom I belong," "of what people I am a part." A person could only be a member of Israelite society by virtue of membership in a Hebrew household, and banning or expulsion from the family unit was assumed to result in death. The private or individual life so highly valued today was of much less importance then. Even divine blessings and curses were typically bestowed on whole families and nations as collective entities, as was God's election, judgment, and salvation of Israel as a whole people. Membership in a Hebrew family, which was part of this collective vision, was therefore crucial not only to ethnic identity in the modern sense but for the Hebrew understanding of God's purposes and the meaning of human existence and faith. In contrast to the romantic love and sentimental bonds of contemporary culture, marriage then was not solely between two individuals but included their households and tribes. Because the survival of the family depended on the orderly transfer of property from one generation to the next, marriage was endogamous—that is, within the group. The entire household had an investment in the marriage contract that was deemed essential to providing an heir who would keep property within that household. Among the elite, marriage was used to establish political treaties and polygamy was sometimes practiced to ensure male heirs for the good of the nation.

2. *Themes in the Hebrew Scriptures*

It is not possible to discern any single model of family structure in the Hebrew Scriptures. Moreover, there are aspects of these cultures that are ethically troubling, including internal envy and competition, traditions of feuds and blood revenge for perceived dishonors, and certainly the predominance of patriarchal interests that shaped gender roles, laws, and customs. Each generation was reared to support the existing social web of power and influence. Nonetheless, certain themes persist in the Hebrew texts. One theme is that some form of family life is clearly viewed as integral to creation. As Genesis 1:27–28 affirms: "So God created humankind in [God's] image,

in the image of God [God] created them; male and female [God] created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply….'"

It is also clear that many of the same family issues found in biblical accounts continue to be faced by families today: infertility and the desire for children, fights over inheritance, sibling rivalry, jealousy between spouses, gender inequality, sexual transgressions, and decisions regarding infidelity, divorce, and commitment. Then, as now, however, God worked out God's will in human history despite the flaws, sins, and what we might label dysfunction of God's people—even blaming and lying (Gen. 3), sexual abuse and incest (2 Sam. 13:1–14), infidelity and murder (Gen.11), and marital contempt (2 Sam. 6:16–23).

Moreover, the tendency to place family loyalties and social success above all else is resisted by the testament's strong emphasis on care for those who are not necessarily part of one's own immediate kin: the widow and orphan, the neighbor, and the sojourner. Thus, a central theme of biblical family life is the covenant to love kin and non-kin faithfully, as God faithfully loves us. God created human beings to live in committed covenant relationship with God, with one another and with creation. God has sustained a covenant relationship with humanity across vast periods of time and great social change. And God continues to sustain and renew that covenant over and over again despite the human tendency towards sin. In this overarching theological perspective, family form is less important than the function of the family as a place of faithfully committed right relationship with other adults, with children, with neighbors and strangers, and with God.

3. *Greco-Roman Families of the New Testament*

In the several centuries that followed the period of the last writings in the Hebrew Scriptures, sweeping changes occurred in Palestine and across the eastern Mediterranean world as Persian, Greek, and finally Roman empires came to power. Throughout the Roman Empire the Greco-Roman household of the elite emerged as the prevailing style of family life and the organizing unit of society. [111] These upper-class households, shaped by Roman law and Greek influences, were hierarchically organized and heavily patriarchal with the father ("paterfamilias") as the legal and functional head of the household. The entire family consisted not only of the father's wife, children, and kin, but many others including slaves. The Greco-Roman household was not simply a place of residence but a beehive of economic life and work. It was where children were educated and public matters negotiated. United by the common practice of paterfamilias's religion, to which his wife and all members of his household would convert (cf. the Philippian jailer and his household, Acts 16:25–34), family piety included the veneration of household deities and daily religious observances.[112]

The many complicated relationships of the Greco-Roman family (like Roman society itself) were knit together by an elaborate system of reciprocal obligations or patronage designed to maintain family honor and advance family wealth and social standing. Consequently, Greco-Roman society resembled "a mass of little pyramids of influence, each headed by a major family … not the three-decker sandwich of upper, middle and lower classes familiar to us from industrial society." [113] Those with higher status granted material goods and social favors to those of lower status in exchange for their constant service and loyalty. In this way the family patronage system established and maintained the interests of political and religious elites.

Among the elite class in the non-Christian Roman world, marriage was a contract between families, particularly important for economic reasons. It was typically arranged by families though usually with the consent of the couple. However, what "consent" means is unclear since girls were married in their early and middle teens while first marriage for a man typically occurred in his mid-to late twenties, an age difference modern people would find suspect. The ideal of marriage as friendship was often articulated and sometimes achieved. Extramarital sexual relationships were permitted and even encouraged for men. They were sometimes justified as a way of honoring wives by confining men's less honorable passions to prostitutes. Divorce (including a no-fault version) was legally and frequently practiced among the Roman elite as alliances shifted. Divorce could be initiated by women. However, marriage to a person without Roman citizenship was not legal, nor were marriages legal among slaves.

According to the upper-class ideal, men were officially assigned the public spaces of markets, temples, civic buildings, and law courts, as well as the front area of the house where the business of politics and patronage was

conducted. Women would be found primarily in the inner parts of the house attending to domestic responsibilities.[114] In Roman law, women were strictly subordinate to men and wives to their husbands, but typically, class and social status could override the limitations of sex. In practice, therefore, the law was inconsistently enforced and some aspects of Roman family law were liberalized over time so that some women in Roman society acquired considerable wealth, independence, and influence (for example, Priscilla in Acts 18).

However, it should be remembered that as many as 90 percent of the urban population did not have the wealth to meet these ideals. We know little about their lives. Archaeological evidence shows that most urban dwellers lived in one or two room apartments above or behind shops with neither privacy nor ventilation nor sunlight. They had neither cooking nor bathing facilities. Food would be purchased or bartered in the streets. Public latrines and baths provided very minimal hygiene. Lower-class women did not share the domestic seclusion or privileges of wealthy women since their labor was essential to the welfare of their families. They managed small businesses and bought and sold in the market. Osiek concludes:

> … the vast majority of residents of an ancient Mediterranean city or town lived lives full of hardship, poor health, and crowding, with high rates of infant mortality and low life expectancy. [115]

4. *Jesus and the Gospels*

Also important to our understanding of the family in early Christianity is the recognition that Jesus began his life where 90 percent or more of first century Jewish Palestinians did, in a traditional agrarian society composed of villages and towns. Villages were typically composed of several whose relationships structured village life. Here the Hebrew family clan system struggled to exist. Lower Galilee was not an isolated backwater, but an area astride busy trade routes that included four major centers of Greco-Roman culture.[116] This area of Jesus' ministry was subject to heavy economic pressures from distant religious and secular authorities that were "gradually undermining and disintegrating the patriarchal family as well as local community relations generally through indebtedness and loss of land."[117] Thus, it was into a world of intersecting cultures, each in its own way status conscious, hierarchical, and patriarchal, that Jesus was born. His ministry was based in these villages and towns, and in certain cities such as Capernaum. Excavations at Capernaum, a city of 12,000–15,000, reveal the basic house structure as one story high, consisting of small rooms around a courtyard with a staircase leading to the flat roof. [118] It was into such homes that Jesus went to teach. In such Jewish and Greco-Roman households the earliest Christian communities gathered and worshiped. When we listen to what Jesus said about families, we need to recognize that he was speaking about these Jewish and Greco-Roman family systems that shaped and controlled all social life. It is to these familial social systems that the Gospel's radical implications for family relationships were first addressed.

Jesus' proclamation of the coming Reign of God, with its great word of love, forgiveness, and the healing of human life, made an uncompromising claim on all who sought to follow Jesus in obedience to the word of the gospel. The gospel writers gave somewhat different emphases in telling how Jesus understood the implications of his gospel for family relations, but they are in agreement on one central point. For Jesus, the claim of the gospel must take precedence over all other claims, including the claims of kinship and family relationships.[119] In a manner that people then and now find shocking, in Mark and Matthew's gospels especially, Jesus explicitly subordinates family loyalty to loyalty to the gospel. "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:37–38, NRSV; Matt. 10:34–36 and Luke 12:49–53). The gospels even indicate that Jesus was in some tension with his own family about his ministry, at least prior to his death and resurrection (Mark 3:19b–21; 3:31–35; Luke 8:21; John 2:12; 7:2, 5, 10).

By challenging the basic familial-social structure of his society, Jesus redefined what the familial-social structure was to be under the reign of God. The honor, status, membership and well-being that society accorded to some due to their family of birth or patronage ties were now accessible to all who would do the will of God. "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother" (Mark 3:34–35, NRSV). Nor would there be singular, hierarchical authorities: "But you are not to be called rabbi … And call no one your father on earth …" (Matt. 23:8–9, NRSV). In the context of both Jewish and Greco-Roman cultures, these words struck at the very core of the social ordering of privilege.

When the disciples disputed who among them was greatest, Jesus singled out children for special attention and, blessing them, proclaimed the realm of God already theirs (Mark 10:14; cf. Matt.19:14; Luke 8:19). In first century Roman and Jewish law, children held a lowly place, next to women and slaves. In Roman society children had no rights, and unwanted newborns could be set out to die. Into a society organized to honor and serve the interests of the privileged, Jesus claimed the Reign of God for the lowly, the vulnerable, and the helpless. In these statements Jesus demonstrated that children and other socially vulnerable people offer a formative truth about the nature of our relationship with God the Creator. It is a relationship sustained not by power or status, but by true and deep humility. The Ruler of all disdained power to become a servant among us. Jesus proclaimed a new human community, a new social order, not formed from the bonds of blood, ethnicity or social status but by the bonds of faith.[120]

Biblical scholar Richard Horsley argues that it is not possible to understand the ministry of Jesus and the early church without understanding the social conditions in which it emerged:

> Thus, in response to illness, self-blame, and possession by alien spiritual forces, for example, the Jesus movement continued the healing, forgiveness of sin, and exorcism initiated by Jesus. In attempting to deal with the heavy indebtedness, poverty, and despair that plagued many of the people, the Jesus movement advocated mutual forgiveness of debts, social-economic cooperation, and other forms of reciprocity in local communities. In reaction to the disintegration of local village communities and the decline of patriarchal authority, the Jesus movement apparently revitalized local life in terms of egalitarian nonpatriarchal familial communities.[121]

5. *Paul and the Later Epistles*

In considering Paul's teachings on the family it is essential to distinguish between those writings that scholars agree are authentically Pauline and other writings that were written at a later time and attributed to him. The two often reflect quite different outlooks on key questions. It is also necessary to understand Paul's teachings in light of the prevailing social assumptions and moral traditions of the time. Paul, like many educated Jews of his day, was deeply influenced both by Jewish law and tradition and by prevalent Greek moral culture concerning family, marriage, and especially sexuality.[122]

Paul wrote to struggling house churches in the cities of Asia Minor and often drew on family metaphors to help bring order to the new Church. He supported the institution of marriage even though he himself believed that remaining single was a better way. Paul's letters went to congregations located by necessity in homes of the rich. But each of these had its own mix of cultures, ethnicities, languages, and social classes, including both literate and illiterate, male and female, adult and child, freed and slave, Hebrew and Gentile, immigrant refugee from the countryside and urban sophisticate. Paul sought to bring unity and cohesion to these extremely diverse, mainly urban Christian communities, many of which were experiencing the social dislocation of their own disintegrating cultural bonds and kinship patterns. Constituted in Christ, this new egalitarian Christian family represented a radical departure from the honor and shame culture of Greco-Roman families constructed on wealth and power, and from their system of patronage and reciprocity.

Paul's letters contain no direct teaching about family in general but they do address the related issues of marital and sexual ethics (1 Cor.7; cf. 1 Cor.5). His teachings were not written as general treatises on these subjects but as specific pastoral responses to concrete questions and problems arising in household churches. He vigorously rejected all "sexual immorality" (1 Cor.5), though in a clear departure from Jewish tradition he expressed a clear personal preference for celibacy over marriage (1 Cor.7:7–8, 38–40) while also honoring marriage in keeping with Jewish law. For married couples he taught an ethic of mutual respect, honor, and love that represented a significant step beyond the pervasive patriarchal ethics and practices of all the traditions of his day (1 Cor.7:2–4).[123] It is unclear to what extent Paul saw the family as an entity made up solely of Christians. When confronted with marriages in which only one spouse had become a Christian, Paul taught that the Christian partner makes the non-believing spouse holy and might even be the agent of the spouse's salvation (1 Cor.7:12–16). But elsewhere he states, "Do not be mismatched with unbelievers" (2 Cor.6:14, NRSV)—a statement that is often understood to refer to marriage.[124]

Much contemporary debate about New Testament teachings with respect to the family-related issues of the first century—marriage, sexuality, children, slavery, and especially the role of women—concerns the so-called "household codes" of the post-Pauline writings: primarily Colo. 3:18–4:1; Eph. 5:22–6:9; 1 Pet. 2:18–3.7; 1 Tim. 2:8–15, 6:1–2; and Titus 2:1–10).[125] These codes originated in Aristotle's teachings about the order of the household. In the first century virtually every non-Christian philosopher included a discussion of them. According to Aristotle, the household is composed of three hierarchical relationships: master and slave, husband and wife, and father and children. Each role was characterized by specific duties. If the household were so ordered, and if governments were similarly ordered, societies would function with order and peace. Clearly the content and spirit of these restrictive regulations are very different from the egalitarian familial community envisioned in the gospels as well as the new, profoundly free community in Christ that Paul envisions in Gal. 3:28 (NRSV): "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." For Paul the destruction of limiting social categories constitutes the freedom of the true human family—a freedom in service to Christ. The household codes also stand in sharp contrast to New Testament evidence that women were active participants and leaders in Paul's churches.[126]

Though Paul was not entirely consistent on the role of women in marriage, and though interpretation of Paul continues to be debated, the "household codes" on the whole appear to express the outlook of a resurgent conservatism of a later first century generation. According to Carolyn Osiek, "One of the most dramatic shifts in early Christian ethics occurred when Paul died and his students introduced the Aristotelian household code to describe the way Christians ought to relate within these atrium houses."[127] Paul's own outlook, like that of John and the other gospel writers and Jesus himself, was fundamentally a profound message of spiritual freedom and transformation whose implications for society and human relations, including those of the family, have scarcely begun to be realized.

6. *New Testament Themes*

Although neither John nor Paul, nor Jesus himself developed a comprehensive theology or ethic of the Christian family, themes arise out of the New Testament witness. Then, as now, the forms that families took were intricately related to existing social constructions of authority, including economic, class, and gender differences. The forms of Greco-Roman and Jewish family systems expressed and implemented the prerogatives of men, and of elite classes. The social function of the family was to support the existing, hierarchical social arrangements. Because Christians are formed by values that call for a new vision of community, one rooted in inclusive, egalitarian relationships that sustain the well-being of all, Christians are called to challenge their society's status quo which inevitably falls short of God's reign.[128] However, the Bible also warns us that the taken-for-granted values of any culture, even when focused on the family, may be dangerous to Christian faithfulness. While the strongly inclusive, faith-based, family tradition found in the gospels does not provide us with a particular Christian family form, it warns us to interrogate our culture's dominant, even "ideal," family forms for how they participate in sustaining unjust social patterns that privilege some while maintaining disadvantage for others. The Christian family cannot be based on a particular culture's family form. Christian families must be measured by their ability to embody the values that define Christian character as Jesus taught them. Lisa Sowle Cahill concludes:

> The central criterion of authenticity to the guiding vision of early Christianity will be the degree to which Christian families succeed in forming members in an ethos of mutuality, equality, and solidarity and in subsuming kin loyalty under compassion for the "neighbor," the "stranger," and the "enemy" as belonging to one's family in Christ.[129]

We pray: O Jesus Christ, who came as servant to all and who called us into family relationships beyond those of biological kin, call us, we plead, out of our limited views of family and into the family of God. When we treat our families as personal and private possessions; when we seek to make our children in our culture's image; when we turn our homes into walled fortresses rather than places of hospitality, forgive us and chasten us. Call us out of our individualism, out of our materialism, out of our possessive pride. Make our families places of justice, of hospitality, of frugality, of compassion, and of service to your all-encompassing love. For we ask this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen

B. *Confessional Heritage*

1. *Families and the Reformation*

Sixteenth century Europe was characterized by vast differences of class, rural and urban distinctions, regional variations, and gender differences. To fully understand the family in a Reformed context would require close attention to these differences. Here we can only speak in rather broad strokes. For the elite, family networks were ties of blood and marriage that had significant political and economic consequences. However, the slow transition from a feudal to a market economy influenced most families to become smaller; households became more nuclear. In a dramatic break with the dominant theology and practices of the Roman Catholic Church, and with centuries of Christian teaching, the reformers, as a whole, rejected the idea that church leadership should be unencumbered by family relations and prepared for spiritual development through sexual abstinence. It is difficult to over-emphasize the importance of this development. For Protestants, religious and spiritual leaders were expected to be married and to take responsibility for family life as a part of the order of creation. Drawing parallels with which we may not be fully comfortable, the good male head of the household was understood to display the characteristics essential for the good church leader. A man's responsibilities for individual family life honed his skills in promoting faith and faithful living in the congregational family. Thus, while still accepting the traditional Roman Catholic teaching about the procreative purpose of sex, John Calvin described marriage as a covenantal relation that was a joy in itself when spouses achieved true companionship and mutual love. Of course, he assumed the propriety of male leadership and women's subordination as part of the order of God's creation.[130] In fact, the 16th century was a time in which women lost access to positions of skilled labor in guilds and were excluded from new institutions of learning. The paradoxical impact of the Reformation's closure of celibate religious orders is that while it re-established the importance of marriage and the family in the lives of male religious leaders—a move with important ramifications for the development of Protestant theology and ethics—it removed women's access to any legitimate calling other than marriage, motherhood, and domesticity.

Calvin's emphasis on the communal context of salvation and the goal of bringing all of human life into obedience with God led him to emphasize the family as a "little church"; that is, the individual family is to bear the same responsibilities and display the same characteristics as the family of faith. He wrote:

> What a wonderful thing to put on record, that the name 'church' is applied to a single family, and yet it is fitting that all families of believers should be organized in such a way as to be so many little churches.[131]

And while faith is a free gift of grace, Calvin placed a good deal of emphasis on sanctification—the positive potential to improve the conduct of individuals as well as the covenantal quality of society. Thus, parental responsibilities included parents' own improvement in obedience to the law, the education of their children for a trade, and the arrangement of suitable marriages, as well as the religious education and spiritual development of their children, apprentices, and servants. For Calvin, this meant teaching children and other household dependents to live frugally and to have compassion for the poor. This was accomplished, of course, by practicing such virtues within the household. Christian families, then, as little churches, as a basic unit within the church, were for Calvin a primary means by which the entire society could be brought into obedience with God.

As in all times, Christian families of the Reformation lived in the tension between the cultural assumptions of the era and the radical demands of the gospel. Reformation families practiced both a class and gender hierarchy consistent with the times but at odds with the Gospel message of inclusion beyond kin relations, of egalitarian social relations, of compassion and generosity. However, the Reformed tradition provides strong guidance for those who take upon themselves the responsibility of marriage and children. The ideal of mutual, covenantal love between spouses still challenges married couples. The responsibility to raise children according to the virtues that are consistent with a life in Christ is at least as demanding today as then. For while this includes attention to the material, intellectual, and spiritual needs of our children, it also requires a similar regard for the needs of all others—of neighbors, of enemies, and of strangers.

2. *The Church's Confessions*

Like the Bible, the confessions of our Church do not directly address the modern question of changing family forms. They are primarily concerned with confessing a right relationship with God, a right relationship with each

other, and a right relationship with created order—all of which provide spiritual guidance for the life of families regardless of form.

The oldest confessions, The Apostles' and The Nicene Creeds, set forth the basic beliefs of Christian faith. They say nothing directly about family life. The more comprehensive confessions, while not addressing the concept of family itself, speak clearly to the purposes of marriage and the rearing of children. The Second Helvetic Confession (Bullinger, 1561) and The Westminster Confession of Faith (1647), the most extensive and longest held constitutional confessions of the Presbyterian church, reflect the teachings of Calvin concerning marriage. They maintain that God's design for marriage is to unite men and women for a life "of love and concord," and "for the mutual help of husband and wife" (*The Book of Confessions*, 5.246, 6.134). To that end, Bullinger established a marriage court (*The Book of Confessions*, 5.248), as did other Protestants, to address family problems and to hear petitions for divorce. Grounds for divorce were typically limited to cases of "physical unfaithfulness," including the refusal or inability of a spouse to carry out the marriage bond, adultery, or desertion. Among the Reformers, only Martin Bucer taught that since companionship was the primary purpose of marriage, the loss of that harmony could be cause for divorce.[132] The Westminster Confession of Faith, which originally allowed for the possibility of divorce in cases of "physical unfaithfulness," was emended in 1958 to include cases of "spiritual unfaithfulness" (*The Book of Confessions*, 6.137).

If God grants children, The Helvetic Confession admonishes parents to rear them "in fear of the Lord" and teach them "an honest trade"(*The Book of Confessions*, 5.249). Moreover, the confession boldly states that what parents do "by way of domestic duties and the management of their households are in God's sight holy and truly good works. They are no less pleasing to God than prayers, fasting and almsgiving" (*The Book of Confessions*, 5.250, emphasis added). This teaching takes on special importance today as most families devote more and more time to employed work, some due to the push of economic stress and some due to the pull of economic status.

The Confession of 1967, our most recent comprehensive confession, addresses the many forms by which the human family experiences the evil of hostile divisions bred by social injustice. It puts a reconciled, right relationship with God and the peoples of the earth foremost. As a result of that relationship, privileges of race, of gender, and of economic power that exclude, dominate, or patronize other members of the human family are denounced. They are contrary to the parenthood of God through which we are all one universal family (*The Book of Confessions*, 9.44). Consequently, individual human families do not merely work to maintain themselves. They also work for "the advancement of the common welfare" (*The Book of Confessions*, 9.46). Through right relationship with God, "a man and a woman are enabled to marry, to commit themselves to a mutually shared life, and to respond to each other in sensitive and lifelong concern; parents receive the grace to care for children in love and to nurture their individuality" (*The Book of Confessions*, 9.47). In 1991, *A Brief Statement of Faith* of the PC(USA) reasserted our faith that God calls us to create communities with gender and racial equality. We confessed the idolatries that cause us to violate that faith. Using parental images, the statement proclaimed God's care and faithful love for all humanity, for each human (*The Book of Confessions*, 10.3).

There are, to be sure, important aspects of modern family life not treated by the Confessions. Still, they offer valuable insights into the demands of faith for family life as it evolves, insights that come from generations past who attempted to be faithful to the Gospel in relation to their understanding of family in their time. They attest to the Reformed tradition's growing understanding of God's design for human life.

3. *Reformed Theological Traditions*

Our tradition first confesses the sovereignty of God. Nothing in the created order and nothing that humans construct should command our absolute allegiance. Therefore, no particular form of family that has existed in human history or that exists today should be privileged as the Christian family form. Before the face of the sovereign God, the Reformed tradition confesses that all human beings sin and fall short of the glory of God in family life and elsewhere. Destructive human relations may exist within any form of family of any race/ethnicity or economic location. All are subject to God's judgment and redeeming mercy.

As conscious as our tradition is of the sovereignty of God and the power of sin in human life and community, it has been equally insistent that the power of God's grace enables us to live in freedom, interpreting changing

human conditions, facing the moral complexities of life, and embracing new behaviors. Therefore, the church is called to be a community of moral discernment, prophetic judgment, forgiveness, and healing in our broken world. The church is a community of faith that calls us into new hope and accountability when we stumble in our personal and social relationships. It is the prophetic voice that calls families and the social institutions on which they depend to seek justice, to do mercy, and to live with humility.

In keeping with this spirit of our Reformed faith, contemporary Christian families must not be understood as self-serving units closed in upon their individual agendas. Nor are they to be measured by how well they achieve cultural standards of success. Christian families, like the inclusive biblical family Jesus called into being and continues to call into being, are families that serve the ends of the church even as they take particular shapes and serve various human functions in differing cultures. In its statement of "The Great Ends of the Church" (G-1.0200), the *Book of Order* presents a holistic understanding of the purposes of the church that provides a goal for Christian family life:

> The great ends of the church are the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind; the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God; the maintenance of divine worship; the preservation of the truth; the promotion of social righteousness; and the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world. [133]

As we consider the interrelationship of church and family and their mutually supportive calling, the representation of what is involved in faithful membership under "The Meaning of Membership: Membership as Ministry" (*Book of Order*, G-5.0102) also provides an excellent model for the Christian family and its members:

> A faithful member accepts Christ's call to be involved responsibly in the ministry of his [and her] Church. Such involvement includes a) proclaiming the good news; b) taking part in the common life and worship of a particular church; c) praying and studying Scripture and the faith of the Christian Church; d) supporting the work of the church through the giving of money, time, and talents; e) participating in the governing responsibilities of the church; f) demonstrating a new quality of life within and through the church; g) responding to God's activity in the world through service to others; h) living responsibly in the personal, family, vocational, political, cultural, and social relationships of life; and i) working in the world for peace, justice, freedom, and human fulfillment. [134]

As we have seen, conditions that oppose the fulfillment of God's purposes for families have existed across the ages. They deface the image of God in persons, families, and communities. *A Vision for Family Ministries* provides this list of destructive social conditions:

> …domination, violence, exploitation and greed, racism, sexism, ageism, classism, physical and mental abuse, poverty, inadequate health care, homelessness, and other demeaning and unjust conditions of life. [135]

To this list we have added economic insecurity, growing economic inequality, the abandonment by society of support for families and the public institutions families need, and the cultural values of materialism, consumerism, and individualism.

We pray: O Gracious and Life-giving God, we pray for the relationships in which we live our lives. Help us to overcome the alienation that so often seems to infiltrate our families, our congregations, and our neighborhoods near and far. Teach us to trust, respect and care for those whose families are different from ours that we may enjoy together times of solidarity, hospitality, inclusion, justice, and re-creation in Your image.

When you placed before us a little child, a leper, a single woman, a father in despair, you taught us to find you in the lives of those most vulnerable. We give thanks for the many ways in which the least among us teach us to question our priorities and encourage us to live in right relationship with each other and with You. Help us encourage and enjoy the gifts of children and youth, of those living with different abilities, of those with bearing heavy family responsibilities. Help us to forswear worldly power, to forgo amassing material goods, and to re-claim the sacred nature of time in their name. Grant us the courage to place your children and those who are most vulnerable first in our lives as families, as congregations, and as a nation that we, too, might know the Reign of God. Amen.

Family in Contemporary Context

What, then, is "family," especially the "Christian family," and how should the church minister to contemporary families? The long history of our faith tradition attests to the teaching of anthropologists. There is

no universal form of "the family." There are, of course, functions that every society must organize. The most obvious is reproduction, resulting in a sexual ethic and the ordering of intimacy, as well as social arrangements for the nurturance, socialization, and education of children. A second is the development and distribution of material goods for the maintenance of human life; i.e., a just economy. A third is the provision of care for dependent persons—the elderly, the ill, the disabled. However, as we have seen, the social arrangements for carrying out these functions have varied across time and cultures yielding significant cultural differences in what is understood to be the responsibility of immediate kin, or of households and extended families, and/or of the larger society. How should we describe families in the context of this culture, with its particular beliefs and practices, and with its particular ordering of social relations?

In times of social transition, the task of describing "family" is difficult; no single description is adequate and none can be definitive for all times. Yet, it is a serious moral and theological task. "Each generation of Christians must consider what family means and what individual freedom and responsible family membership involve in light of faith. But the limits of these questions are not set by Christian faith alone, nor is the impact of their answers felt only by the Christians who raise the questions."[136] Thus, any contemporary description must be attentive both to the core teachings of our faith and to changing environments for working, raising children, caring for dependents, and expressing human intimacy.

One fundamental aspect about modern U.S. families has become clear. The way our modern society is organized, family units in diverse forms are the primary source of nurturance. Simply at the biological level, it is through families that food, clothing, shelter, and health care are distributed by those members in the workforce to those members not in the workforce. It is through families that most care giving of children and other dependent persons is rendered. It is in committed relationships that sexual intimacy is best expressed. Nurturance evokes a special type of relationship: a relationship characterized by love, support, commitment, mutuality, faithfulness, sharing, and caring. Nurturance involves affectional relations, cooperative and enduring, regardless of individual merit. What may be at the core of our fear that families are in crisis is the sense that the family is the only place in our society where this way of relating, this certainty of belonging, is honored and practiced. However, as lives spin faster and possessions multiply, as more of our children's socialization is in the hands of paid providers, as personal care giving and response to social injustices are restricted by the scarcity of time, we may fear that the family is losing the skills to nurture. If that is so, then ministry that aims to strengthen and preserve families is ministry that aims to strengthen and preserve nurturing relationships in the context of a society that, in all other arenas, seems to value individualism, competition, and relationships contingent upon a person's usefulness to some specifically defined, often economic, goal.

Given that neither the Bible nor *The Book of Confessions* contains a singular description of the family, given the Gospel warning to avoid giving privileges to any cultural form of family that arises from and sustains social inequalities among people, and given the Gospel mandate to become one human family bound by loving regard for all as measured by our loving inclusion of the least, the following description of contemporary U.S. families can direct the church's ministry to the multiple forms of family we encounter in our society and our congregations.

> A family is persons in any stage in the life cycle who are comprehensively bonded by birth, kinship, marriage, adoption, covenant, or mutual consent. At the center of such bonding is an enduring commitment to love and nurturance, mutual support in just relationships, and personal care and fidelity particularly through major life transitions and crises.[137]

Theological Affirmations

In light of our biblical, confessional and theological heritage as it relates to changing families in our contemporary context, the following theological affirmations provide a basis for carrying out the ministry and mission of the church to contemporary families:

- Family life, in a variety of forms, is integral to created life, common to all peoples, and a vehicle through which humans are formed. Christian families have the responsibility of teaching and practicing the beliefs and values that exhibit faithfulness in the God revealed in Jesus Christ in whatever culture they reside. In particular, John Calvin's concept of the family as "little church" and The Second Helvetic Confession are strong statements

affirming the absolute importance of family-sustaining activities as "holy and truly good works" equal in value to all other human activities.

- Biblical traditions present God as working through diverse family structures—structures that modern women and men would no longer judge as adequate for the values of equality and inclusiveness we now see as God's intention for us. Therefore, we are assured that God's redeeming and reconciling Spirit continues to work in and through many forms of family. We are humbled to realize that families serve divine purposes beyond themselves or their culture's needs. Ultimately the structure of one's family is not as important as how we allow God's life giving and redeeming spirit to shape and work through our families.

- As important as our family life is, the biblical traditions strongly warn against the promotion of one's own family's welfare over the inclusion and well-being of others: particularly the most vulnerable in one's society, the poor, and also neighbors, strangers, sojourners, and even enemies. Jesus' strong attack against the family social system of his culture challenges us to stand against the cultural privileges that benefit some families over others. Jesus defined family not by blood or legal ties, but by the presence of love and the spiritual bonding that only God can create. Christians are called into a "new" family based not on biological or legal kinship but on kinship with God in a family of disciples seeking love, justice and mutual respect with one another and the world. Therefore, no family form should be made an idol, but all forms of family should be instruments that open us to service and participation in the larger community as servants of God. As "little church" the Christian family nurtures its own, but does not nurture solely its own. The Christian family welcomes its own, but does not welcome solely its own. As part of God's family, the Christian family is kin to all.

- The church, as a community of moral discernment, prophetic judgment, forgiveness and healing, lives in life-giving tension with the norms of its culture. By grace the church risks living on the edge of social change by calling society to account for its treatment of families. Such grace bids us to work toward loving and just relationships in families and in the social order in conformity with the Reign of God. Thus, obedience to Christ is "the ground of the church's duty and freedom to reform itself in life and doctrine as new occasions, in God's providence, may demand."[138]

Endnotes

1. *The Confession of 1967*: 9.03.

2. Specific references may be found in Advisory Committee On Social Witness Policy of the General Assembly Council, *Presbyterian Social Witness Policy Compilation* (Louisville: Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2000).

3. Unless otherwise indicated, these are stories of people known to the members of the Changing Families Editing Team. The names are fictitious.

4. This story (NJ2) and many other stories of women who are, or have been, on welfare are found in *Faces of Change: Personal Experiences of Welfare Reform in America*, produced by the Alliance for Children and Families, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 2001.

5. On April 29, 1992, a jury in suburban Simi Valley pronounced four white Los Angeles police officers not guilty of assault in the beating of Rodney King. Much of the pent-up anger at police brutality found a target: the neighborhood Korean-owned stores. Nearly 2,500 Korean-owned stores were destroyed.

6. Margaret K. Nelson and Joan Smith, *Working Hard and Making Do: Surviving in Small Town America* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1999), 78–79. This book studies the impact of job deterioration on married couple families in a rural, northeastern state.

7. Kristin Luker, *Dubious Conceptions: The Politics of Teenage Pregnancy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 1–3.

8. Prior to about 1970, remarriage after the death of a spouse was the primary cause of the creation of a new "stepfamily." Now, divorce is. Increasingly such families may be referred to as "blended," "reconstituted," or "reorganized" families in order to avoid the negative stereotypes inherited from previous centuries.

9. Robert Heilbroner, *The Nature and Logic of Capitalism* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co.: 1985), 140.

10. Data available at www.pcusa.org, "Who We Are."

11. Nationally, 21 percent of adults have experienced divorce. See the Executive Summary of "Marriage in Oklahoma," a study by the Bureau for Social Research, Oklahoma State University, at ww.okmarriage.org/pdf/exec_sum_with_cover.pdf.

12. For an account of life for families in the 1950s, see Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), chapter 2. Unless otherwise indicated, this data comes from that chapter.

13. Luker, 9.

14. Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Cornel West, *The War Against Parents: What We Can Do for America's Beleaguered Moms and Dads* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), 103.

15. See *Turn Mourning into Dancing: A Policy Statement on Healing Domestic Violence* (Louisville: Office of the General Assembly, 2001) 21; available at www.pcusa.org/oga/publications/dancing.pdf.

16. Teresa Amott and Julie Matthaei, *Race, Gender, and Work: A Multi-cultural Economic History of Women in the United States,* rev. ed. (Boston: South End Press, 1996), 306-307.

17. Lawrence Mishel, Jared Bernstein, and John Schmitt, *The State of Working America 2000–2001* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 47.

18. Ibid., 227; Amott and Matthaei, 190; Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Civilian Labor Force 2000," available at http://ftp.bls.gov/pub/special.requests/ep/labor.force/mlrtab2000-03.txt.

19. Data from www.uscensusbureau.gov.

20. Mishel, Bernstein, and Schmitt, *The State of Working America 2000-2001*, 96. Unless otherwise noted the following data is taken from Lawrence Mishel, Jared Bernstein, and John Schmitt, *The State of Working America 2000–2001* or *The State of Working America 1998–1999* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).

21. Ibid., 130.

22. The Taskforce on Issues of Vocation and Problems of Work in the U.S., *Challenges in the Workplace* (Louisville: Publication Service, Presbyterian Church (USA), 1990), 19.

23. Louis Uchitelle, "Workers Find Retirement Is Receding Toward 70," *New York Times*, 3 February 2002: BU 4.

24. Juliet Schor, *The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), 30-32. More recently, a report by the International Labor Organization, a U.N. agency, stated that U.S. workers were steadily increasing the number of hours spent in employed work while the workers of other industrialized nations were decreasing their employed hours. In 2000, U.S. workers worked, on average, almost nine full weeks more than European workers. Steven Greenhouse, "Report Shows Americans Have More 'Labor Days,'" *New York Times* 5 September 2001: A6.

25. Data from Mishel, Bernstein, and Schmitt, *State of Working America 2000-2001*: 157-158. In 1999 about two-thirds of the labor force did not have college degrees; another third were college graduates or had advanced degrees.

26. Donald Bartlett and James Steele, *America: What Went Wrong?* (Kansas City: Andrews and McMeel, 1992), 20.

27. Deirdre Wulf, *In Their Own Right: Addressing the Sexual and Reproductive Health Needs of American Men* (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 2002), 8–9; available at www.guttmacher.org/us_men/index.html.

28. See the General Assembly's 1990 report, *Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice*.

29. Vicky Lowell and Heidi Hartmann, "Unemployment Watch-How are Women and Families Faring in the Recession?" *Quarterly Newsletter, Institute for Women's Policy Research*, (Winter/Spring 2002): 7.

30. Mishel, Bernstein, and Schmitt, *The State of Working America 2000/2001*, 132.

31. Ibid., 140.

32. Ibid., 34. For the definition of racism see the General Assembly's 1999 report, *Facing Racism: A Vision of the Beloved Community*, 6–7.

33. Pyong Gap Min, *Changes and Conflicts: Korean Immigrant Families in New York* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998), 39. Approximately 80 percent of Korean immigrants are either self-employed or work for a Korean-owned business. Pyong Gap Min argues that this economic segregation of the Korean workforce has important implications for family life (17).

34. Mishel, Bernstein, Schmitt, *The State of Working America 2000/2001*, 61, 258, 260. For international comparisons, see 387–97.

35. Ibid., 53, 36.

36. Ibid., 260.

37. Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, 183.

38. Paul R. Amato and Alan Booth, *A Generation at Risk: Growing Up in an Era of Family Upheaval* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 12.

39. Joy Raatz, "Who Are the Caregivers?" *Church & Society*, Vol. 92, No. 4 (March/April 2002): 10. Lillian Rubin, *Worlds of Pain* (New York: Basic Books, 1976); John Scarzoni, *Sexual Bargaining Power: Power Politics in the American Marriage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); Philip Blumstein and Pepper Schwartz, *American Couples* (New York: Pocket Books, 1983); Catherine Kohler Riessman, *Divorce Talk* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990); Demi Kurtz, *For Richer, For Poorer: Mothers Confront Divorce* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

40. Sharlene Hesse-Biber and Gregg Lee Carter, *Working Women in America: Split Dreams* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 197–200. Data taken from the *General Social Survey, 1994–1996* (Chicago: National Opinion Research Center).

41. Pyong Gap Min, *Changes and Conflicts*, 51–57.

42. Terry Arendell, *Fathers and Divorce* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995).

43. *Turn Mourning*, 21.

44. "Intimate Partner Violence: A Special Report from the Bureau of Justice Statistics," May 2000; available at www.ncadv.org.

45. Amato and Booth, 12.

46. Annette Lawson, *Adultery* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

47. For numerous references to this research, see Demie Kurtz, *For Richer, For Poorer*, 22, and footnotes 21 and 22; Gay Kitson, *Portrait of Divorce: Adjustment to Marital Breakdown* (New York: Guilford Press, 1992), 115–16; Amato and Booth, *A Generation at Risk*, 12; Hewlett and West, *The War Against Parents*, Chapter 5.

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50. Abigail Stewart, Anne Copeland, Nia Chester, Janet Malley, and Nicole Barenbaum, *Separating Together: How Divorce Transforms Families* (New York: Guilford Press, 1997), 50; See also, Karla B. Hackstaff, *Marriage in a Culture of Divorce* (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1999).

51. Linda J. Waite and Maggie Gallagher, *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People are Happier, Healthier, and Better Off Financially* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 138.

52. Paul Amato and Alan Booth, *A Generation at Risk*, 219. See also Karla Backstaff, *Marriage in a Culture of Divorce*. Hackstaff compares couples who married in the '50s "culture of marriage" with those who married in the '70s "culture of divorce."

53. Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Really Are: Coming to Terms with America's Changing Families* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 79.

54. Mary Duenwald, "2 Portraits of Children of Divorce: Rosy and Dark," *New York Times*, 26 March 2002: D6, D10. See E. Mavis Hetherington and John Kelly, *For Better Or for Worse: Divorce Reconsidered* (New York: Norton, 2002); Judith Wallerstein, Julia Lewis, and Sandra Blakeslee, *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce: A 25-Year Landmark Study* (New York: Hyperion, 2000).

55. Sara McLanahan and Gary Sandefur, *Growing Up with a Single Parent* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994).

56. Paul Amato, "Life-Span Adjustment of Children to their Parents' Divorce," *The Future of Children*, Vol. 4, #1 (Spring 1994): 147. See also, Paul Amato, "Children's Adjustment to Divorce," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* Vol. 55 (1993); Paul Amato and Bruce Keith, "Parental Divorce and the Well-Being of Children: A Meta-Analysis," *Psychological Bulletin* Vol. 110 (1991). This is a review of almost every quantitative study done on divorce. The authors found lower levels of well being for children of divorce but that these were not large. The more carefully controlled the studies were the smaller the differences found.

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59. Sara McLanahan and Irwin Garfindel, "Single-Mother Families and Social Policy: Lessons for the United States from Canada, France, and Sweden," in K. McFate, R. Lawson, and W.J. Wilson, eds. *Poverty, Inequality, and the Future of Social Policy: Western States in the New World Order* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1995), 367–83; Sara McLanahan, Irwin Garfinkel, and Christina Norland Audigier, "New York, New York, the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study Baseline City Report," available at http://crcw.princeton.edu.

60. E. Mavis Hetherington, Tracy Law, and Thomas O'Connor, "Divorce: Challenges, Changes and New Chances," in Arlene S. Skolnick and Jerome H. Skolnick, *Family in Transition*, 11th ed., (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2001), 228. See also Ronald Simons, et. al., ""Explaining the Higher Incidence of Adjustment Problems Among Children of Divorce Compared with Those of Two-Parent Families," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol. 6 (November 1999): 1,020–33. These authors point out that, while parental divorce is correlated with a modest increase in child adjustment problems, the specific mechanics to explain this link are not well understood. Their research reaches the conclusion that the link between family form and child development issues is due to the increased likelihood that parents are "less likely to engage in competent parenting and are more likely to engage in parental conflict…." (1,031); Yong Min Sun, "Family Environment and Adolescents' Well-Being Before and After Parents' Marital Disruption: A Longitudinal Analysis," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* (August 2001) available at www.ncfr.org/aboutus/ipressreleases.asp.

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82. Albelda, Randy and Chris Tilly, *Glass Ceilings and Bottomless Pits; Women's Work, Women's Poverty* (Boston: South End Press, 1997), 66.

83. Gregory Acs and Sandi Nelson, "Assessing the Relationship between Welfare Policies and Changes in Living Arrangements of Low-income Families and Children in the Late 1990s," (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 2002), 17-18.

84. Erica Goode, "A Rainbow of Differences in Gays' Children," *New York Times*, 17 July 2001: D1, D7. In February 2002, the American Academy of Pediatrics announced its support for the right of gay men and lesbians to adopt their partners' biological children. The American Psychological Association also supports gay and lesbian parenting. See Erica Goode, "Group Backs Gays' Who Seek to Adopt a Partner's Child," *New York Times*, 4 February 2002: A1, A21.

85. Data from "America's Families and Living Arrangements: Population Characteristics," U.S. Census Bureau, (June 2001): 3, 7. The U.S. Census Bureau uses the following definitions. "Household" refers to one or more people living in a housing unit. "Households" may be further described as "family" and "nonfamily." A family household has at least two persons who are related either by blood, marriage, or adoption. A nonfamily household, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, is a person living alone or a householder who shares a housing unit with only nonrelatives (roommates or boarders, for example). "Own children" refer to biological, step, or adopted children under the age of 18 who have never married. Some data calculated from "Households by Type: 1940 to Present" at www.census.gov/population/socdem/hh-fam/tabHH-1.txt.

86. For example, Betty Carter and Monica McGoldrick, eds. *The Changing Family Life Cycle: A Framework for Family Therapy*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1989).

87. Earl E. Shelp and Ronald H. Sunderland, "Congregational Caregiving," *Church & Society*, Vol. 92, No. 4 (March/April 2002): 42.

88. Ibid., 55.

89. Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer, *Families Valued: Parenting and Politics for the Good of All Children* (New York: Friendship Press, 1996), 174.

90. John T. McNeill, ed., *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Ford Lewis Battles, trans., (Philadelphia: Westminister Press, 1960), 720–23.

91. Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy, *Hope for a Global Future: Toward Just and Sustainable Human Development* (Louisville: Office of the General Assembly, PC(USA), 1996), 85.

92. Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Cornel West, *The War Against Parents: What We Can Do for America's Beleaguered Moms and Dads* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), 94.

93. *Minutes*, UPCUSA, 1981, Part 1, 298.

94. *Hope for a Global Future*, 12.

95. Larry Rasmussen, *Moral Fragments and Moral Community: A Proposal for Church in Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 80.

96. General Assembly Statement, *Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice*, 1990.

97. John G. Red Horse, Cecilia Martinez, Pricilla Day, Don Day, John Poupart, Dawn Scharnberg, "Family Preservation: Concepts in American Indian Communities," National Indian Child Welfare Association (December 2000), available at www.nicwa.org.

98. E-mail communication to editing team.

99. R. G. Rumbaut, "Ties that Bind: Immigration and Immigrant Families in the United States," in *Immigration and the Family: Research and Policy on U.S. Immigrants*, eds. Alan Booth, Ann Crouter, and Nancy Landale (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997), 27.

100.Pyong Gap Min, *Changes and Conflicts: Korean Immigrant Families in New York* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998), 99, 26–28.

101.For resources on these issues, see *Reflections on Interreligious Marriage: A Joint Study Document* (The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the World Council of Churches, 1997); John Bush and Patrick Cooney, *Interchurch Families: Resources for Ecumenical Hope* (Louisville and Washington, D.C.: Westminster John Knox Press and the NCCB, 2002); *Interfaith Marriage: A Resource by Presbyterian Christians* (Louisville: Global Mission Ministry Unit, 1992). See also the 1980 PCUS statement, "Christian Marriage."

102.Rasmussen, *Moral Fragments,* 105. Rasmussen is describing Robert Bellah, et. al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

103.Ibid., 88.

104.Emilie Townes, "Response to 'Social Science, Christian Ethics and Democratic Politics: Issues of Poverty and Wealth' by Mary Jo Bane," *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* (2001): 41.

105.PC(USA), *Minutes*, 1993:884.

106.Ronald E. Peters, "The Extended Family: A Heritage of the African-American Congregation," unpublished. Dr. Peters is Associate Professor of Urban Ministry, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

107.See "An Invitation to Sabbath," Report of the Work Group on Sabbath Keeping to the 212th General Assembly, Louisville: Office of Spiritual Formation, 2000.

108.Cited in "An Invitation to Sabbath."

109.For a list of forty family forms found in the Bible, see Virginia Ramsey Mollenkott, *Sensuous Spirituality: Out From Fundamentalism* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), pp. 194-197, quoted in *A New Day for Family Ministry*, ed. Richard P. Olson and Joe H. Leonard Jr. (Bethesda, Maryland: Alban Institute, 1996), pp. 49–53.

110.Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Family: A Christian Social Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 24.

111.Ibid., 23–28. See also Richard A. Horsley, *Sociology and the Jesus Movement*, 2nd ed. (New York: Continuum, 1994). The discussion of Greco-Roman culture is taken from Carolyn Osiek and David Balch, *Families in the New Testament World: Households and House Churches* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997).

112.Jewish families throughout the empire continued their ancient traditions of family worship and the observance of Jewish law at home.

113.T. F. Carney, *Shape of the Past: Models and Antiquity* (Lawrence, Kansas: Coronado, 1975), 90.

114.Osiek, 40–45.

115.Ibid., 32.

116.Howard Clark Kee, "Early Christianity in the Galilee: Reassessing the Evidence from the Gospels," in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, Lee I. Levine, ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 4–15.

117.Horsley, *Sociology and the Jesus Movement*, 123.

118.Kee, 16.

119."According to the Gospels, Jesus said relatively little about family, marriage, or sexuality. When he did mention family, it is clear that discipleship had replaced kinship as the essential relationship for Christians (Matt. 10:34–42; Mark 3:13–35)." Janet F. Fishburn, "Family Values and Family Ministry," *Church and Society* 84:2 (November/December, 1993): 39–55. See also Fishburn, Janet. *Confronting the Idolatry of Family: A New Vision for the Household of God*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991.

120. In John's gospel Jesus was essentially silent with respect to explicit teachings about family relations, and the terminology of friendship generally replaced that of family and siblings when describing the community of Jesus' followers (John 15:15; but cf. John 21:17). Believing in Christ the Revealer of God clearly took absolute precedence over all social loyalties. As previously noted, there are hints of tension between Jesus and his family in John, but Jesus' relation to his mother is portrayed as having been especially close (e.g. John 19:25–27).

121. Horsley, 127–28.

122. Osiek, 103–18. Most scholars believe that the letters to the Ephesians and the Colossians are pseudonymous due to the very different themes and issues they present. They appear to come from the last third of the first century when Gentile Christianity needed to define itself against both Jewish Christianity and the Greco-Roman culture.

123. Margaret M. Mitchell, "Marital Relations: 1 Cor. 7: 1–11," in *The Family Handbook*, Herbert Anderson, Don S. Browning, Ian S. Evison, and Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, eds. (Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1998), 249–53.

124. Some see this passage as a clear condemnation of interfaith marriage. See James Reid, *The Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. X (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1952), 351f. Others suggest that the statement refers to keeping separate from pagan idolatries.

125. Note that 1 Cor. 14:33b–36, which falls into this category, is now believed by scholars to be a later editorial addition to Paul's letter. Osiek, 117; but cf. 1 Cor. 12:13b and Ibid., p. 122.

126. Ibid., 117f.

127. Osiek, 118–23. See also Cahill, 38–42.

128. See Reinhold Niebuhr, *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1935; reprint ed. Seabury, 1979).

129. Cahill, 47.

130. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses, Called Genesis, Volume First*, trans. John King (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1981), 172. (Calvin's commentary on Genesis 3:13).

131. John Calvin, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians 16:19* as quoted in Cahill, *Family*, 71. But note that Calvin was repeating the view of 5th century patristic, John Chrysostom. See Cahill, 58.

132. Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Christianity and the Making of the Modern Family* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 79–80.

133. *The Book of Order*, Office of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2000, Section G-1.0200.

134. Ibid., Section G-5:0120.

135. A Vision for Family Ministries, Education and Congregational Nurture Ministry Unit of the Presbyterian Church (USA), 1992, is a working paper of the former Education and Congregational Nurture Ministry Unit of the PC(USA). See also White, *All for the Family*, op cit., for the antecedents of this document from the work of Lindell Sawyers of the National Presbyterian Mariners and Robert White in relation to a Consultation on the Family in Philadelphia sponsored by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in 1989.

136. Paula M. Cooley, *Family, Freedom, & Faith: Building Community Today* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 30.

137. This description brings together insights from Robert H. White, Jr. "Preface," *All for the Family* (Fayetteville, N.Y.: Portable Learning Center, 1989) and Diana R. Garland, *Family Ministry: A Comprehensive Guide* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1999).

138. *The Confession of 1967*: 9.03.

Appendix A

A Vision for Family Ministries

- We praise God the Creator of the world, who in Divine Wisdom created us a family of God. We give thanks for the God known through Jesus Christ, who comes again and again with the promise of new life at every stage of growth, and with the ever renewed vision of a humanity restored. We rely on the presence and power of God's Holy Spirit to inspire and judge us in our common quest for meaning and faithfulness as people of God.

- We give thanks for the rich diversity of the human family: for female and male, for the old and young, for couples and singles, for people of all races and ethnic origins, for people who are abled and people who are disabled, for children and youth, and for the generations together. We rejoice for the gifts each brings to family life, and we celebrate the human capacity for intimacy, mutuality, and community which is God's gift to all. We commit ourselves to nurturing the love and justice of God in all human relationships.

- We confess with sorrow and regret that the image of God in us is defaced in family life blighted by domination, violence, exploitation and greed. We see these forces manifest in racism, sexism, ageism, classism, physical and mental abuse, poverty, inadequate health care, homelessness, and other demeaning and unjust conditions of life.

- We affirm families as communities in which God works through us for the health and well being of persons. We affirm the redemptive possibilities for life in committed and responsible relationships. We also affirm our life together as a family of faith wherein we are nurtured as households of love and justice, and sent forth to declare in word and deed the good news of reconciliation and fullness of life revealed to us by God in Christ.

- We celebrate children and youth, and the families of love who nurture and care for them into adulthood. We commit ourselves to eradicating all those forces in the home and social environment, which jeopardize the future of the young.

- We celebrate the contributions which children and youth make in families and to the family of God, the church. We acknowledge and appreciate the roles children and youth play through their thoughts, words, and actions.

- We affirm the integrity and rights of children and youth as family members, as members of the family of faith, and as part of the human community.

- We celebrate parents and affirm their sacred role as family leaders, and commit ourselves as a household of faith to help support and equip them for their role.

- We celebrate the beautiful variety of relationships, and commit ourselves as people of God to work for and witness to the love and justice of God in all human relationships.

- We commit ourselves as a community of faith to nurture and support the relationship of marriage, and to providing those entering relationships of mutual love and commitment with a context for personal and spiritual growth, so that they may give witness to God's love and faithfulness in their lives together.

- We commit ourselves and call upon all our sisters and brothers in Christ to serve those whom God has given us in families, and to be open to God's grace in the transformation of that which human sin and brokenness has marred. We call upon the whole church to nurture and support all households to the end that they may live humanly fulfilling lives and reflect God's love for all.

- We commit ourselves to supportive and healing ministries with those who suffer the pain of loss, alienation, separation and dislocation in their relational lives, so that they may experience the renewing and reconciling love of God in themselves and through others.

- We commit ourselves to encouraging public policies which foster stability, security and equity in family relationships.

- We commit ourselves to shaping an inclusive and caring community of faith in which single persons, single parent families, blended families, families with members of homosexual orientation, extended families, older adults, young adults, persons who are disabled, the widowed, the divorced, and families of differing racial/ethnic heritage may experience acceptance, support and spiritual nourishment.

- Finally, . . .we surrender our ministry with families to the loving judgment of God, whose vision in Christ of love, peace and justice for the whole human family renders all our efforts incomplete until God's vision has become completely our own. Until that time we hope and pray that our commitment to and ministry with families is to the glory of God.

[This document was based on the work of the National Presbyterian Mariners, a churchwide Consultation on the Family conducted in Philadelphia in 1988, the Portable Learning Center in 1989, and the former Education and Congregational Nurture Ministry Unit in 1992.]

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Appendix C

The Journey of the Task Force on Changing Families

Charge and Purpose

The Task Force on Changing Families was appointed by the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) in response to a referral the committee received from the 209th General Assembly (1997) "to examine the issue of changing families and changing social structures that affect families, particularly focusing on the effects of these on children…" (*Minutes*, 1997, Part I, pp. 42,44,536).

Members of the Task Force

The Task Force on Changing Families represented the breadth and depth of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Equally divided between clergy and lay, men and women, young and old, this racially diverse group also represented the broad spectrum of theological views of the Church.

Members of the task force included Clarence Page, parish clergy, military chaplain, Lumberton, North Carolina; Sarah Reyes, parish clergy, San Leandro, California; Marnie Abraham Russell, parish clergy, juvenile court judge, Jeannette Pennsylvania; Lois McLendon Stroman, elder, retired educator, Dublin Georgia; Jeanne Choy Tate, elder, Ph.D. candidate, children's spiritual formation, San Francisco, California; Bernice Thompson, elder, hospital-based clinical social worker, Chesterfield, Missouri; William (Beau) Weston, elder, associate professor of sociology, Danville, Kentucky; and Robert White, clergy, synod executive and social ethicist, Syracuse, New York. The task force was chaired by Barbara J. Gaddis, clergy, marriage and family therapist, from Boone, Iowa. Three members of the task force resigned for personal reasons. They were: Nancy Becker, pastor, Portage, Indiana; Jeffrey K. Light, clergy, Kansas City, Missouri; and Amanda Miller, other, New York, New York. Rodney J. Hunter, clergy, professor of pastoral theology, Atlanta, Georgia, served as the task force consultant. Belinda Curry, clergy, associate for policy development and interpretation, Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP), Louisville, Kentucky, staffed the task force.

The Task Force Process

Our work was structured by first writing a study guide on the issue of changing families, and distributing it in the winter 2000 for feedback from the church at large. This process helped us focus on issues of agreement and disagreement regarding the church's social witness about families.

The task force met six times, over a period of two years (1999–2001) at various locations around the country. Because the topic of families and family values inspires such strongly held opinions, we were concerned to hear from people in a variety of church settings, suburban, urban, rural, ethnic minority and ethnic majority, and to hear from policy makers at the national level. In each meeting we attempted to make use of the resources available at that location resulting in visits to local churches and presentations by local and national experts.

Louisville, Kentucky—September 1999: Orientation to the work of the task force took place through examination of the prospectus, discussion of the problems and opportunities facing families and presentations by J. Bradley Wigger, director of the Center for Congregations and Family Ministries and associate professor of Christian Education, Louisville, Kentucky, and task force consultant Rodney J. Hunter. The task force outlined the work ahead, appointing a churchwide study guide steering committee and electing a chair.

Fort Worth, Texas—March 2000: Work proceeded on the churchwide study guide.

Phoenix, Arizona—May 2000: The task force met with Martha Sadongei, clergy, and staff affiliate for Native American Ministries Committee of Grand Canyon Presbytery to learn about the unique issues facing Native American families both on and off the reservation. Work on the churchwide study document continued.

Chicago, Illinois—September 2000: Time in Chicago was spent visiting local churches, their pastors and members. First we met with Jerry Andrews and members of the First Presbyterian Church of Glen Ellyn, Illinois to help us understand the issues facing families in a suburban environment. Next we met at the Fourth Presbyterian Church with John Wilkinson, staff and members to understand some of the ministries a large urban church offers. Also in the city we met with Jeff Doan and members of the Lincoln Park Presbyterian Church. Finally we traveled to Park Ridge, Illinois to meet with Yunchun Han and members of the Evergreen Presbyterian Church in order to gain insight about Korean American families.

Washington, D.C.—March 2001: Our perspective broadened to a national picture in meeting with the staff of the Presbyterian Washington Office to hear the issues they perceived to be of utmost importance for families. Rebecca Davis, Religious Networks Coordinator of the Children's Defense Fund and Susan Orr, Director of Marriage and Family Care of the Family Research Council, presented us their organizations' policy concerns and objectives. At this meeting we received the document "Strengthening American Families: Reweaving the Social Tapestry" from the Ninety-seventh American Assembly, and wrestled with the issues it presented and the points it raised.

Kansas City, Missouri—May 2001: We visited with Keith Harris from St. Paul Presbyterian Church of Kansas City, Missouri to help us understand African American families and their needs. We spent the bulk of the meeting reviewing the final draft of the proposed policy document and making policy recommendations.

In addition to its work as a task force the chair and several members of the task force shared in a presentation of its work to the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) at a fall meeting in 2001. At that meeting the ACSWP thanked the task force for its work and referred the proposed draft policy report to an editing committee consisting of Ray Anglin, pastor, from Plantation, Florida; Sue Dickson, pastor, from El Paso, Texas, and Nile Harper, retired chaplain, from Ann Arbor, Michigan; Gloria Albrecht, clergy, professor of Religious Studies, from Detroit, Michigan, served as the editing

team consultant; and Barbara J. Gaddis, chair of the task force. Belinda M. Curry, associate, and Peter A. Sulyok, coordinator, ACSWP, staffed the team.

The first meeting of the Changing Families Editing Team was held in Santa Fe, New Mexico, in late February 2002. The team developed a timeline for completion of its work on the draft changing families policy statement. The editing team presented a revised draft of the proposed changing families' policy statement to the ACSWP at the committee's summer 2002 meeting held in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Members of the editing team shared presentations of its work to a synod consultation on the proposed policy statement on "Living Faithfully with Families in Transition" jointly sponsored by the General Assembly Council (GAC) and the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) in Louisville, Kentucky, on October 11–13, 2002. The feedback from this synod consultation was received by the ACSWP at its fall meeting in El Paso, Texas. The committee voted to send the proposed policy statement on "Living Faithfully with Families in Transition" to the 215th General Assembly (2003). Members of the changing families editing team and ACSWP staff shared in a presentation on this report to the commissioners to the 215th General Assembly (2003) in Denver, Colorado.