

PRESBYTERY OF THE TWIN CITIES AREA  
**Bills and Overtures Committee**  
Report to Presbytery March 13, 2009

**1. The committee recommends approval of these items.**

The committee votes on the following overtures were unanimous to **RECOMMEND** that the Presbytery concur with the following overtures. (Note: these do not yet have GA-assigned numbers) The vote on each was 6/0/0

- a. Overture 008. *On Partnering for Peace in Sudan—From the Presbytery of Trinity.*
- b. Overture 013 *On Strengthening the Peacemaking Program—From the Presbytery of Pittsburgh*

**Overture 008:** *On Partnering for Peace in Sudan—From the Presbytery of Trinity.*

Trinity Presbytery overtures the 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2010) of the PCUSA to show that working toward a just and lasting peace for all of Sudan is a high priority in keeping with the great ends of the church (*Book of Order*, G-1.0200) by adopting the following objectives:

(1) Support intercessory prayer and advocacy by the churches regarding (a) renewed international commitment to the full and timely implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005 (CPA); (b) increased private investment for the economic development of Southern Sudan and other areas affected by conflict; (c) increased development assistance by the United States government, including assistance in restoring security for the citizens of Southern Sudan and other areas affected by violence and proliferation of arms; and (d) renewed efforts by all parties to end hostilities in Darfur and elsewhere in Sudan, including full access by humanitarian organizations to provide care and resettlement assistance to refugees and the internally displaced, all for the purposes of the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God and the promotion of social righteousness.

(2) Support the formation of new covenant-based partnerships by PCUSA presbyteries with presbyteries of the Presbyterian Church of Sudan (PCOS) or the Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church (SPEC), making arrangements through the PCUSA Sudan Mission Network, with presbyteries reporting results to the Executive Director of the General Assembly by July 1, 2011, for review by the General Assembly Mission Council and thereafter, publication on appropriate web sites, all for the purposes of the proclamation of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of humankind, the preservation of the truth, and the maintenance of divine worship.

(3) Designate, after consultation with other interested denominations, a period of several weeks in 2010 as an ecumenical “Season of Prayer for Peace in Sudan,” urging the churches to include prayers for peace in Sudan in regular worship services, culminating in a “National Day of Prayer for Peace in Sudan,” including the celebration of partnering relationships by PCUSA presbyteries with PCOS and SPEC for the purpose of the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world.

*Rationale*

1) The CPA was executed on January 9, 2005, after years of persistence by international negotiating teams in the face of resistance by the government of Sudan, thereby establishing a Government of

National Unity (GONU) for an interim period of six years during which Southern Sudan is at once a participant in the GONU and semi-autonomously governed.

2) The CPA set deadlines for a national census, elections based on the census results, and, at the end of the Interim Period (*i.e.* January 9, 2011), a referendum for self-determination for the people of Southern Sudan; however, the census results are in dispute, the date for elections has been postponed twice, and adoption of a referendum law is still pending, in large part due to continual undermining, manipulations and delays imposed by the GONU's majority party based in Khartoum; as a result, the CPA, the best hope ever for improved governance in Sudan, is in imminent danger of failure.

3) The Sudan Council of Churches, at its 17<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in 2009, made an urgent appeal to all parties to the CPA to reinvigorate their efforts and fulfill commitments agreed to in the CPA.

4) We, who have been richly blessed, have connections and resources to pray for our brothers and sisters in Sudan and advocate on their behalf with our government, and also to partner with them, presbytery to presbytery, accompanying them as they labor to rebuild their lives and communities and integrate returnees.

5) The time has come to expand the number, commitment and scope of our partnerships with Presbyterians in Sudan to assuage the acute needs they are experiencing in the ongoing process of governmental transition and regional reconstruction.

6) To the extent that peace and reconciliation in Sudan has been achieved, it is due to God's mercy and the ecumenical Church in Sudan, the voice for the voiceless, that works through community-based networks to advocate for the advancement of civil society.

7) The Church in Sudan, though mighty in faith, faces tremendous challenges, including limited resources and lack of security to engage in capacity building as it seeks to educate people who never before have participated in an election process. Thus an ecumenical "Season of Prayer for Peace in Sudan" as an exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world will be a special encouragement to the Church in Sudan, in particular, our sister denominations the PCOS and SPEC.

8) Similar resolutions to the objectives stated hereinabove were adopted by The Episcopal Church at its 76<sup>th</sup> Convention July 8-14, 2009.

### ***Overture 013: Strengthening the Peacemaking Program—Presbytery of Pittsburgh.***

The Pittsburgh Presbytery respectfully overtures the 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2010) to strengthen the Peacemaking Program by the following actions:

1. Recognize and celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Peacemaking: The Believers' Calling and the Peacemaking Program.

2. Direct the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACWSP) to create a nine-person task force (as specified below) to:

a. review Peacemaking: The Believers' Calling and its action recommendations and report the results to the 220<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2012), with the intent of updating the engagement of Presbyterians in peacemaking; and

b. prepare a resolution for the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) to forward to the 220<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2012) on the dangers of proliferation of Weapons of Mass

Destruction (WMD) and responses to this proliferation in light of Christian ethics, the impact of on-going wars, and previous General Assembly policies.

3. Direct the General Assembly Mission Council with the advice of the Peacemaking Program and Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) to create an advisory committee of six expert persons to meet quarterly to counsel the Peacemaking Program on issues regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and other emerging issues.

4. Direct the General Assembly Mission Council through its Peacemaking Program and the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) to convene a seminary and college-wide review of peace studies and peacemaking opportunities appropriate to the major shifts in the approach of the United States international relations and to report the results of the study to the 220<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2012). The goal of the review is to engage students in active peacemaking and to share the wisdom of faculty among our church-related educational institutions.

#### *Rationale*

Thirty years ago the 192 General Assembly (1980) issued a call to the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America to give priority to peacemaking and to create a Peacemaking Program. The biblical and, theological ethics of Peacemaking: The Believers' Calling have served the church well. The Peacemaking Program has educated the church with excellent programs, educational materials, international visitors, study tours, and conferences. At this time, however, the mission of this program deserves careful review, both in terms of current challenges to peace and commitment of the church's resources for this witness. Some funds designated for the program in the past have been spent down, and other related education and action programs (such as Church and Society magazine) have been ended. The United Nations' Office has also seen its funding reduced, at a time when the needs and opportunities for theologically informed international witness substantially increased.

The introduction to Peacemaking: The Believers' Calling said that "this request of the General Assembly was a product of its times

-born in part from the United States' defeat in Southeast Asia and the loss of prestige and power in the changing world situation;

-born in part from the unwillingness of the emerging nations to accept the continued domination of the developed nations;

-born in part from the increasing insecurity over the perilous nuclear weapons stalemate in which any miscalculation could annihilate humanity;

-born in part from concern for the hungry and oppressed of the world."

However, the times have changed:

-The United States regained its prestige and new powers prior to 9/11, playing the role of "superpower" and "indispensable nation" in the eyes of many.

-The cold war was concluded.

-New wars have broken out and threaten to break out over disputes about Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) have become a major issue at the United Nations.

-The phenomenon of globalization has been recognized and to many it represents Americanization of the finances of the world. The credit crisis and global recession have weakened the capacity and credibility of the United States' global leadership.

-Religions of the world are now widely recognized to be major influences in wars, peacemaking, and international decision making.

-The rise of Muslim influence and militancy was not considered as a factor in the 1980 policy.

These new factors interrelate to make very timely a review of Peacemaking: The Believers' Calling and the peacemaking work of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Arms control, expenditures, and threats of war over the non-proliferation questions require work beyond the 1988 policy, Christian Obedience in a Nuclear Age. There is now fear that terrorists are seeking Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) capacity. The U.S. and its supporters apply economic sanctions to countries suspected of developing Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and consider war against certain countries obtaining Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) capacity. The issue of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) capacity was one of the motivating factors for the second war in Iraq.

Peacemaking work deserves the counsel and expertise of the church to address these issues. This need could be met by a committee of Presbyterian experts in the fields of disarmament, social ethics, weapons, war and peace studies, the United Nations, development, and human rights. These experts should be drawn from previous task forces, resolution teams, or outstanding peace leaders in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) who have in depth understanding of both church and international relations. Six persons consulting quarterly should be sufficient. This same pool of persons, including those with military experience, would provide nominees for the review task force and college and seminary consultations.

Peacemaking: The Believers' Calling recommended actions vis-à-vis higher education, and new priorities and funding for this work can be based on a study of opportunities of peacemaking in these institutions. The whole panoply of tasks around peacemaking work deserves review if a prudent selection of work to be energized and funded is to be considered. This is particularly true for coordinating peacemaking work in seminaries and colleges of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). There is much energy and expertise in the Presbyterian higher education world which the Church should encourage and relate to its peacemaking work. Not only is peacemaking part of our evangelism on college campuses, new forms of joint work can be cost effective with cyber networking technology.

Since 1946, General Assemblies have called for the negotiated abolition of nuclear weapons, based on the immorality of relying upon Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) for security. Christian Obedience in a Nuclear Age (1988) warned against the numbing acquiescence to nuclear weapons. The Church is in danger of learning to live with Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) until they are used.

Energy and commitment inspired by Jesus Christ's peacemaking needs to be ignited in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to face new issues not discussed in 1980.