

## ***Commissioner Resolution. On the Global Crisis for LGBT People and Their Families: A Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Response.***

Given the global crisis for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons and their families in eighty-one countries where homosexuality is illegal and the impact of persecution that threatens their lives, health, and safety, the 221st General Assembly (2014) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) does the following:

- 1. Encourages each Presbyterian to hold in prayer our LGBT sisters and brothers in the countries where they are vulnerable around the world.**
- 2. Encourages the Presbyterian Mission Agency to create educational resources about the critical global LGBT situation and forward those resources to synods and presbyteries for study and action.**
- 3. Encourages Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregations to consider preparations to provide sanctuary, safety, and support for LGBT refugees and asylum seekers.**

**[Financial Implications: \$9,726 (2015) PMA]**

### ***Rationale***

God's global family includes Presbyterians in more than 100 countries with Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) mission partnerships in more than fifty countries. In eighty-one countries where homosexuality is illegal, God's global family includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people who face persecution for simply being who they are, for whom they love, and with whom they create a family. Harsh sentences including life in prison can be imposed in a growing number of countries such as Uganda and Nigeria.

In addition to the criminalization of homosexuality, the death penalty can be imposed in ten countries. Persecution in the form of anti-propaganda laws such as in Russia engenders violence against LGBT persons and hinders HIV-AIDS and human rights work. Evangelism and pastoral care that could be offered to LGBT persons and their families in these countries by local congregations and our mission co-workers is significantly compromised because of criminalization and persecution.

Scripture, the *Book of Confessions*, and the *Book of Order* of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) inspire and require solidarity and ministry with the LGBT people and their families around the world whose well-being and very lives are threatened by the laws of their own countries and the resulting experiences of oppression and persecution.

A Brief Statement of Faith proclaims to the world the way the Holy Spirit inspires us "to hear the voices of peoples long silenced, and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace" (*Book of Confessions*, 10.4, Lines 70–71).

Psalms 9:9: "The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble."

Matthew 25:34–40:

"Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'"

W-7.4002 Doing Justice:

Justice is the order God sets in human life for fair and honest dealing and for giving rights to those who have no power to claim rights for themselves. The biblical vision of doing justice calls for:

- dealing honestly in personal and public business
- exercising power for the common good,
- supporting people who seek the dignity, freedom, and respect that they have been denied,
- working for fair laws and just administration of the law,
- welcoming the stranger in the land,
- seeking to overcome the disparity between rich and poor,
- bearing witness against political oppression and exploitation,
- redressing wrongs against individuals, groups, and peoples in the church, in this nation, and in the whole world

*Book of Confessions*, A Brief Statement of Faith, 10.4, Lines 65–71: "In a broken and fearful world the Spirit gives us courage ... to unmask idolatries in Church and culture, to hear the voices of peoples long silenced, and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace."

The encouragement of social activism in the world is a sign of the community of God. The *Book of Order* states this in F-1.0304:

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 promotion of social righteousness; and
- the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world.

Janet Edwards, Pittsburgh Presbytery  
James D Schroll, Baltimore Presbytery

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### **ACSWP ADVICE AND COUNSEL ON ITEM 09-20**

*Advice and Counsel on Item 09-20—From the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP).*

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy advises that the 221st General Assembly (2014) approve Item 09-20.

This commissioners' resolution is consistent with existing PC(USA) policy. The PC(USA) historically supported the basic human rights of all people, including prima facie discrimination against sexual minorities.<sup>1</sup> The UN Human Rights Committee has urged states to pass antidiscrimination legislation that expressly includes sexual orientation, and to prohibit in their constitutions all discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, the U.S. has recently begun to recognize violence against sexual minorities as grounds for asylum. Immigration Equality helped more than two hundred LGBT asylum petitions, a 250 percent increase from 2009.<sup>3</sup>

#### Endnotes

1. "...abuses by military and paramilitary forces; political rights ... social and cultural rights of women, children, and lesbian and gay people; and religious rights." PC(USA), 2000, pp. 288–292.
2. See UN Human Rights Committee, "Concluding Observations: Slovakia," CRC/C/SVK/CO/2, June 8, 2007, UN Human Rights Committee "Concluding Observations: Namibia," CCPR/CO/81/NAM, July 30, 2004, para. 22, UN Human Rights Committee, "Concluding Observations: Trinidad and Tobago," CCPR/CO/70/TTO, November 3, 2000, para. 11, UN Human Rights Committee, "Concluding Observations: Poland," July 29, 1999, CCPR/C/79/Add.110, para. 23.
3. Joel Millman, "The Battle for Gay Asylum," *Wall Street Journal*, <http://online.wsj.com/articles/why-sexual-minorities-have-an-inside-track-to-a-u-s-green-card-1402676258>.

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### **ACWC ADVICE AND COUNSEL ON ITEM 09-20**

*Advice and Counsel on Item 09-20—From the Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns.*

The Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns advises that the 221st General Assembly (2014) approve Item 09-20.

The commissioners' resolution clearly states the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s long-standing belief in the basic human rights of all of God's children. LGBTQ persons share the same humanity as heterosexual persons and are equal partners in the body of Christ. Patriarchal definitions of men and women are socially constructed and limit the full humanity of all. Therefore, encouraging Presbyterians, as they are able, and providing resources to equip them to become advocates for LGBTQ persons, even to the point of offering sanctuary to those forced to flee, will enhance the church's ministry to brothers and sisters who suffer in so many places across the world.