

**PEACEMAKING AND SOCIAL JUSTICE
IN THE
BOOK OF ORDER
OF
THE CONSTITUTION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A)**

The commitment of the Presbyterian Church to social justice and peace has been long established. The Form of Government in The Book of Order begins by stating:

All power in heaven and earth is given to Jesus Christ by Almighty God, who raised from the dead and set him above all rule and authority, all power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. ...

Christ calls the church into being, giving it all that is necessary for its mission to the world, for its building up and for its service to God. (G-1.0100)

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.
(G-1.0200)**

The historic principles of the church remind us

That “God alone is the Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to his Word, or beside it, in matters of faith and worship.” (G-1.0301)

The Constitution says of the reformed tradition:

Central to this tradition is the affirmation of the majesty, holiness and providence of God who creates, sustains, rules and redeems the world in the freedom of sovereign righteousness and love. (G-2.0500)

Related to this affirmation we are reminded:

The recognition of the human tendency to idolatry and tyranny, which calls the people of God to work for the transformation of society by seeking justice and living in obedience to the Word of God. (G-2.0500)

The mission of the church is given form by God’s activity in the world:

God created the heavens and the earth and made human beings in God’s image, charging them to care for all that lives...

God liberated the people of Israel from oppression: God covenanted with

Israel to be their God and they to be God's people, that they might do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with the Lord...

God was incarnate in Jesus Christ, who announced good news to the poor, proclaimed release for prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, let the broken victims go free, and proclaimed the year of the Lord's favor. ...

God's redeeming and reconciling activity in the world continues through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit... (G-3.0100)

In speaking of the Church as the body of Christ, the church is referred to as **"the provisional demonstration of what God intends for all humanity,"** and it is **"called to be a sign in and for the world of the new reality which God has made available to people in Jesus Christ."** (G-3.0200)

The new reality revealed in Jesus Christ is the new humanity, a new creation, a new beginning for human life in the world:

Sin is forgiven.

Reconciliation is accomplished.

The dividing walls of hostility are torn down. (G-3.0200)

The Church is challenged to be Christ's faithful evangelist

**...participating in God's activity in the world through its life for others by:
healing and reconciling and binding up wounds
ministering to the needs of the poor, the sick, the lonely, and the powerless,
engaging in the struggle to free people from sin, fear, oppression, hunger, and injustice,
giving itself and its substance to the service of those who suffer,
sharing with Christ in the establishing of his just, peaceable, and loving rule in the world. (G-3.0300)**

The challenge is demanding:

The church is called to undertake this mission even at the risk of losing its life... (G-3.0400)

In describing the meaning of church membership the Constitution states:

A faithful member accepts Christ's call to be involved responsibly in the ministry of his church. Such involvement includes:

proclaiming the good news. ...

responding to God's activity in the world through the service to others,

living responsibly in the personal, family, vocational, political, cultural, and social relationships of life,

working in the world for peace, justice, freedom and human fulfillment. (G-5.0102)

In the local church God's people perform a number of ministries, including

worship, proclamation, sharing the Sacraments, evangelism, nurture,

counseling, personal and social healing and service. (G-7.0102)

The session of the church has the responsibility and power, among other things,

To lead the congregation in participation in the mission of the whole church in the world, in accordance with G-3.000

To lead the congregation in ministries of personal and social healing and reconciliation in the communities in which the church lives and bears its witness;...

To lead the congregation continually to discover what God is doing in the world and to plan for change, renewal, and reformation under the Word of God. (G-10.0102)

The presbytery is also

To develop strategy for the mission of the church in its area consistent with G-3.000. (G-11.0103)

Furthermore, the presbytery has direct responsibility and power

To deal with prevailing, emerging, and emergency issues of racism, racial violence, and racial injustices, as well as with any ideology that promotes racial oppression in the church and in the surrounding political and social contexts. (G-11.0103, aa.)

The Constitutional questions for both officers and for ordination include:

Will you in your own life seek to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, love your neighbors, and work for the reconciliation of the world? (G-14.0206 & G-14.0405)

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