



PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

GRADYE PARSONS  
STATED CLERK

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Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The economic crisis that has affected our lives in recent years has only exacerbated the long-running battle among those who are entrapped in the cycle of poverty. With recent actions taken by the U.S. and state governments, which have reduced Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, and the continuing struggles to raise the federal minimum wage, hopes are waning among those who need help the most. Extreme income inequality and the loss of worker rights have impacted communities across the United States, especially racial ethnic families and communities.

The 220th General Assembly (2012) set forth recommendations referred by the Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns (ACREC), compelling us to take action in support of the continued advocacy for those whose voices are not heard; those who struggle to make ends meet and do their best to support their families with jobs that still cease to provide a living wage. Studies have shown that, though struggles prevail with many families, the impact on African American and Hispanic families is exponentially greater. At the pinnacle and in the aftermath of the economic crisis, racial ethnic families continued to lose jobs with little success in regaining employment with comparable wages. With many of these families carrying high-risk mortgages, those job losses led to a greater percentage of foreclosures within racial ethnic communities. Thus the cycle of poverty began with limited or receding resources available to aid people and their families to emerge from living below what many of us deem to be the bare minimum of survival.

It is vital that we lift up the plight of those ensnared in the cycle of poverty and amplify their voices. Congregations are encouraged to participate in local grass-roots efforts to advocate for and with people in your communities.

- The PC(USA) teaches, “All 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 (citation from *God’s Work in Our Hands* (207th General Assembly(1995), 19). The ultimate goal of an economy is to serve people as we live out our calling to love God and neighbor. Every human economy, throughout the world, is subject to the sovereignty of God” (Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy, *Human Rights Update*, 2012, 16).
- We recommend to you the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy’s Report: *God’s Work in Our Hands* (1995). ([http://www.pcusa.org/site\\_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/gods-work-in-our-hands-1995.pdf](http://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/gods-work-in-our-hands-1995.pdf))

May God continue to lead us to renewed commitments,

Gradye Parsons  
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)