

ACSWP seeks people to serve on study teams authorized by 221st General Assembly

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO SERVE ON FIVE COMMITTEES, REPORTS DUE TO 222ND ASSEMBLY (2016)

following actions of this summer's 221st General Assembly, the Advisory (ACSWP) is seeking nominations from across the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) of people to serve on study task forces. The studies below were authorized in response to overtures.

A short nomination form is available from acswp@pcusa.org.

Because of the PC(USA)'s limited funds, these study teams are smaller in size than they have been in the past. General Assembly statements on social witness policy are developed by committees elected by the Assembly rather than simply by staff members. People of expertise and experience are invited to submit their names and brief background, and then ACSWP selects teams. These study teams report back to ACSWP, ensuring editorial review and often wider testing of the reports produced.

The studies authorized and nominees sought:

Drug Policy Reform: "The task force shall consist of seven to nine selected volunteer members representing the following stakeholders/disciplines: policy analyst/advocate; subject matter specialists in addiction science, criminal justice, and international relations; law enforcement; judicial representative; formerly incarcerated drug offender/drug user activist; defense counsel/community litigator; theologian." [Full text.](#)

End-of-Life Concerns: "to convene a 7-8 person team of Presbyterian ethicists[, theologians, pastors,] and physicians, including one or more drafters, to produce a pastoral and educational booklet giving guidance" on physician-assisted suicide, newer options of sedation and palliative care, treatment of persons with severe disabilities, and ethical questions raised by these and related policy matters. This team is to meet only once on a face-to-face basis, building on previous GA positions. [Full text.](#)

Sustainable Development and the Precautionary Principle: "to commission a study group of three to five persons to (1) review the precautionary or prevention principle in relation to emerging biotechnical developments and existing Presbyterian social witness policy on environmental ethics, and (2) prepare a study paper and resources for social media, with appropriate recommendations." The overture names nanotechnology, genetically engineered organisms and the interaction of toxins in changing environments as possibly causing irreversible impacts. [Full text.](#)

Two-State Solution in Israel and Occupied Palestine: "Examines present General Assembly statements about the viability of a Palestinian state and ... evaluates these statements in light of the most recent developments regarding the ... facts on the ground in Palestine; (3) Makes a recommendation about whether the General Assembly should continue to call for a two-state solution in Israel Palestine, or take a neutral stance that seeks not to determine for Israelis and Palestinians what the right "solution" should be; (4) Makes other policy recommendations related to

findings from this report.” ACSWP seeks a group 3-4 persons familiar with peacemaking, international law, economic development, and human rights in relation to the Middle East. [Full text.](#)

Human Trafficking Comprehensive Policy (with the [Advocacy Committee on Women’s Concerns](#)): “to appoint four members to a Reference and Study Task Group... to review the current PC(USA) policy regarding human trafficking and propose comprehensive human trafficking policy grounded in a human rights based approach for the denomination.” [Full text.](#) Other studies involving the members of ACSWP itself include an update of the resolution on voting rights and electoral reform in light of recent Supreme Court decisions, a review of tax policies affecting the free exercise of religious liberty and ministerial compensation, a study of anti-racism policies and their implementation and a possible consultative process on changes in Cuba that might impact the mission of the church and U.S. foreign policy in the Caribbean.

In addition, following up the ACSWP resolution on “The Gospel From Detroit,” the Assembly authorized a roundtable consultation on urban mission and ministry. That resolution is a practical and ongoing response to the challenges facing cities like Detroit.

ACSWP and the Peacemaking Program also will be engaged in the final stage of the Peace Discernment process: “As the next stage in a six-year process of discernment, the 221st General Assembly (2014) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) directs the Stated Clerk to send to each presbytery, electronically and in print, ... five affirmations and supporting rationale with the request that they discuss and take an advisory vote on each affirmation and send the results of those votes, along with a summary of the floor discussion, back to the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy [by July 1, 2015,] to help guide the preparation of a report on peacemaking directions for the 222nd General Assembly (2016).”[Full text.](#)

In all of the cases cited above, the study teams are to report to the 222nd General Assembly in 2016.