

From Homelessness to Hope:

Constructing Just, Sustainable Communities for All God's People

In June 2008, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) “affirm[ed] the complexity of issues surrounding homelessness and the need for a holistic approach that (1) addresses ministry to those experiencing or risk of homelessness and (2) the structural components necessary for a comprehensive solution.”

Principles affirmed as foundation to faithful ministry with persons who are homeless include: universal access to safe, decent, accessible, affordable, permanent housing is a measure of a just society, The church is called to create communities of hospitality, The church is called to create sustainable communities where people can be securely housed, The church is called to challenge society to provide safe, decent, accessible, affordable, and permanent housing for all persons who cannot secure such housing through their own means.

The Assembly encouraged congregations, presbyteries, synods, and other church-related entities to pursue comprehensive responses to the crisis of homelessness and affordable housing, including providing the physical space and the spiritual openness to address the problem, including:

Shelters, transitional housing, mixed income communities, and other affordable housing and links to service providers

The impact of employment practices, including sustainable wages and benefits, employment of youth and adults reentering the workforce after being homeless or institutionalized

Links with local, regional, and national coalitions that advocate for worker justice, green design in homes, and affordable housing

Supporting residents in public housing in their efforts to organize and have a voice in their communities

Application of stewardship strategies in the area of homelessness, such as allocating physical space for services and tithing capital campaign proceeds

The Assembly affirmed ...public policy recommendations in four categories:

Housing and Services: preservation of Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program; restoration and expansion of Project-based Section 8, including revitalization of 2.5 million units; development of housing trust funds at the municipal, state and national levels; enactment of inclusionary zoning policies and other strategies to achieve mixed-income communi-

ties; and improved enforcement of existing nondiscrimination laws with regard to housing and home financing.

Services for Persons Experiencing Homelessness or at Risk of Homelessness: revision of municipal zoning codes to include temporary housing and to prohibit discrimination based on housing status; increased funding for the federal departments that serve the homeless, including the Dept. of Housing and Urban Development, the Dept. of Health and Human Services, and the Dept. of Veterans' Affairs; expansion of adequate funding for supportive housing (housing plus services); increased investment in the McKinney-Vento Act Homeless Assistance programs; and continued investment in several programs that help low-income people obtain and stay in housing.

Lending Practices: development of foreclosure prevention strategies and programs to benefit households at risk; and restrictions on predatory and abusive lending practices.

Taxation: support fiscally responsible federal budget priorities and adequate revenues to ensure long-term funding for the programs outlined above; tax incentives that encourage “smart growth;” more equitable distribution of tax benefits for those at lower income levels, including expansion of the EITC and CTC to more low-income people, and the development of a refundable tax credit targeted to low-income renters.



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