

# PNECC Peace and Justice Declaration of 2010

June 20, 2010

The Presbyterian-New England Congregational Church (PNECC) has a long standing commitment to justice and to peace. To clarify our identity, several years ago we adopted a slogan for our signage and brochures: "We thank God by working for a just and loving world." Inspired by the "Just Peace Church" affirmation of the United Church of Christ (UCC) and by the "Peacemaking: The Believers' Calling" pronouncement of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PCUSA), we now re-affirm and expand our commitment to vigorous peace and justice ministry by officially declaring ourselves a PEACE AND JUSTICE CHURCH. The declaration is important as a means to shape our identity and to provide a theological framework for reflection and action. It will strengthen our ongoing efforts as well as open new pathways of connection, compassion and action locally and globally.

We here declare our call, our principles, our vision and our commitment to take action as a PEACE AND JUSTICE CHURCH.

## THE CALL TO PEACE AND JUSTICE MINISTRY

*Love God, love one another; love your enemies (Matthew 22:37; Matthew 5:43).*

Based on enduring Christian principles, we seek to effect changes to meet the challenges arising from the costs and consequences of war, from persistent poverty, racism, exclusion and repression, and from massive degradation of the environment. These and many other problems call to the Christian conscience. Just as the Gospel stories give witness to Jesus' prophetic challenge to the established social and economic order, so do we recognize and accept our responsibility to address the problems of our time in a coherent and hope-filled way.

Responding to the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, our church is called to go into the world to build a culture of peace and justice for all God's creation. With repentance and humility, and with the power of hope and love, let us tend to our task.

## THE PRINCIPLES OF A PEACE AND JUSTICE CHURCH

*A just peace arises from the interrelationship of friendship, justice, and common security from violence. A PEACE AND JUSTICE CHURCH is committed to strengthening those building blocks with ministries of direct service, legislative advocacy, and courageous witness based on Christian principles.* The approach of the PNECC congregation and leadership to these ministries may differ from time to time and from person to person due to changing national and local problems and individual passion. The church leadership provides empowerment and resources for congregational and individual reflection and action within the durable framework of our declaration as a PEACE AND JUSTICE CHURCH.

As a PEACE AND JUSTICE CHURCH, our ministry will be realized as we work to **examine** both the rich history of our church's actions and the rationale for peace and justice ministry; to **define** what drives individuals and our church to action; and to **build** our goals and our actions to reach

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them. We must match our confession of Jesus Christ as the Prince of Peace with the practices of our church in its ministry.

Our church's faithful obedience to this calling means active participation in the formation of our values and beliefs, and those of our society. It means seeking peace and justice in the personal and social relationships of our culture and exercising our citizenship in the body politic to shape local, national and foreign policy. It is of strategic importance to raise our own and public consciousness and to nurture changes in public attitudes.

To this end, we will strive for maximum involvement and influence in our church family to bring about peace and justice. To affirm our calling is to act in faith, hope and love.

## **OUR VISION**

PNECC will incorporate a PEACE AND JUSTICE CHURCH identity on an institutional level, and nurture development of that identity on an individual level. Our diversity of thought, experience, skill, education, gender, sexual orientation and age is an asset in our effort to examine, define, and build an enduring vigorous peace and justice ministry. The church's programs, decision-making, and economics will be shaped by our PEACE AND JUSTICE DECLARATION that calls us to embrace non-violence, to build connections with others, to work for justice, and to build a culture of shared security. To do this we will be rooted in a spirituality of inner growth and outward action.

## **OUR COMMITMENT** (Adapted from the Albany Confession of 2008)

A formal commitment to be a PEACE AND JUSTICE CHURCH proclaims that working for peace and justice is a central declaration of the Gospel and is essential to the life of our congregation. It is an invitation to grow and to pass on an active tradition of peace and justice ministry to future generations.

To make this commitment with honesty and integrity to ourselves and to each other, we must admit our shortcomings within the human family and to creation before God, and renew our covenant with God for wisdom, compassion and courage to pursue Isaiah's vision of a "peaceable kingdom" so that we may act as true disciples of the One who came "that all may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10).

As followers of Jesus Christ, we are called by God in these dangerous times to hold fast our confession of hope, to affirm our core beliefs, to confess our own sinfulness, and to let the church and the world know where we stand and what we resolve to do.

## **Therefore:**

- We affirm that we are called by God to speak out about critical matters of humanity, justice, and spiritual integrity in a conflicted and confused day.

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- We affirm that God is calling us to follow Jesus Christ as a light to the nations and, in his name, to stand up for social justice and stand against all forms of oppression.
- We trust and exult in the power of the Holy Spirit to guide us to a new day and make what we do and say what God wills.

## **We also confess who we really are:**

- We confess and acknowledge that we do not stand alone, that we do not pretend to know all that is good and right, that other believers, including some of us, may choose other paths.
- We confess that we have not always followed Jesus Christ faithfully, that we sometimes run Jonah-like from his commands, that we have failed to do what should be done, and have done things which ought not to have been done, and that we constantly need to examine ourselves and ask forgiveness.

## **Nevertheless, as followers of the Prince of Peace, we resolve to:**

- Follow the One who embraces all nations and peoples in love and to obey the teachings of Jesus Christ in regard to universal civil and human rights.
- Love all of our neighbors and practice love of enemies, thereby affirming all members of the human community.
- Be peacemakers, rejecting the use of violence and supporting efforts to reduce conflicts through communication, diplomacy, and mediation rather than through confrontation, violence, armed conflict, or preventative attacks.
- Be in dialogue and take cooperative action with ecumenical and interfaith partners.
- Be diligent stewards of God's creation and support eco-justice for all people of our one planet.
- Work for economic justice in our own communities and for all of God's children throughout the world.

With an urgency born of hope, we pray that God will give us strength to speak the truth with boldness, and invite all who share our confession to return to the unity of justice, hope, and love.

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This Declaration is informed by these sources:

"Peacemaking: The Believers' Calling" adopted by the PCUSA 192<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly (1980) <http://www.pcusa.org/peacemaking/believers.pdf>

"Affirming the United Church of Christ as a Just Peace Church" adopted by the UCC 15<sup>th</sup> General Synod (1985)  
<http://www.ucc.org/justice/peacemaking/pdfs/Just-Peace-Church-Pronouncement.pdf>

"A Social Creed for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" adopted by the National Council of Churches USA (NCCUSA) at the General Assembly of November 2007 (the UCC and PCUSA are members of the NCCUSA and were members of the NCCUSA task force that developed the Creed)  
<http://www.pcusa.org/acswp/socialcreed21st.htm>

"Connecting to the Creed: A Social Contract for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" adopted by the PCUSA 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2008)  
<http://www.pcusa.org/acswp/pdf/connectingtothecreed.pdf>

"The Albany Confession Of 2008" signed by *The Albany Confessing Clergy*, January 22, 2008 <http://www.albanyconfessingclergy.org/>

The Social Concerns Committee (SCC) is responsible for this document and for its maintenance based on the wisdom and direction of the Governing Board and the Congregation of the Presbyterian-New England Congregational Church. The SCC shall encourage and assist the church family – Congregation, Boards and Committees – to act intentionally to set a broader, deeper path for peace and justice work.