



## Presbyterian Peace Fellowship

[presbypeacefellowship.org/ga223](http://presbypeacefellowship.org/ga223)

Text GApeace to 33222 to get  
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## Briefing Paper for GA Committee

# 7

## Ecumenical & Interfaith Relations

### Dear Committee 7

Greetings from the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship as you prepare to serve at the 223<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly. Each GA is an opportunity to strengthen the witness of the PC(USA) on issues of peace and justice in the world ----and to transform how we act as the church of Jesus when we all go home after the last gavel and hymn. We write to lift up several items before Committee 7 and to share a concern about a GA plenary action.

Peace does not just happen. It springs from the never-ending work of truth, healing and building relationships across human-made barriers. The Presbyterian Peace Fellowship supports and celebrates overture (07-01) from Carlisle Presbytery to condemn religiously inspired and motivated violence, discrimination and hate speech, in particular, those actions based on anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim behaviors and language. Presbyteries would be encouraged to create interfaith relations committees or task forces to promote interfaith relations, dialogue and understanding.

We also applaud (07-02) to invite Ecumenical Advisory Delegates to the next General Assembly.

We appreciate the reports on Ecumenical Dialogue (07-04, 07-05, 07-06) because their goal is to build relationships. However, we were struck by the near-complete absence of real-life concerns and any focus in the reports on the mission of the church in the world. Among many issues of violence, suffering and injustice, our planet faces an urgent crisis of climate change and the impact it will have on war, migration, food, health, land, water, air and virtually everything else. Would this not be a priority focus in the uniting of the body of Christ? Perhaps there is a way that your committee could suggest this focus for future ecumenical dialogue.

Please see over for a bit more on this concern!

We wish you faith, energy and a wonderful experience in your service in St. Louis. If there is anything that the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship can do to be of help, please call on us.

Sincerely,

Emily Brewer, PPF Executive Director

[ga@presbypeacefellowship.org](mailto:ga@presbypeacefellowship.org)

Please see over for GA Plenary Information.

### Celebrating 74 Years!

**Who we are:** Founded in 1944, the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship is a nation-wide community of Presbyterians who act on the example of Jesus to reduce war, violence and exploitation. We are a non-partisan group, open to all Presbyterians. Except for a small staff, we are volunteers who pay our own way to GA. We do not work for or represent any government or outside lobby group. Because of our focus on peacemaking, we have divested our Peace Fellowship Endowment Fund at the Presbyterian Foundation of all fossil fuel companies and over 20 companies that profit from or enable the Occupation of Palestine by Israel.

**Be Bold! Nonviolence Works.**

Please see [presbypeacefellowship.org/ga223](http://presbypeacefellowship.org/ga223) for information on all peacemaking issues coming to the 223<sup>rd</sup> GA. If you have questions or suggestions at GA, you can always text us. Text GApeace to 33222.

In the GA Exhibit area, visit us at **Booth 119-121** for conversation & for education/action resources.

### Join Us for the Peace Breakfast!

**Wed. June 20, 7am, Tickets at [ga-pcusa.org](http://ga-pcusa.org)**

### Progressive Presbyterians GA Issues Briefing Breakfast, Sat. June 16, 7-9 am

at Centenary Methodist Church. No ticket is required, but please register at [presbypeacefellowship.org/ga223](http://presbypeacefellowship.org/ga223)  
Option: Following this briefing, join the last leg of the 260 mile PCUSA Walk for a Fossil Free World, from the Centenary Methodist Church to the General Assembly.

### PCUSA Walk for a Fossil Free World

**June 1- 16,** We are walking from the PC(USA) offices in Louisville to the GA in St. Louis. Step-by-step, the walkers join 40 presbyteries that have called for action at the 223<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly to protect creation by divesting from fossil fuel stocks. **See [pcusawalk.org](http://pcusawalk.org)**

To join The Walk for the final day, including the entry into St. Louis, contact [info@presbypeacefellowship.org](mailto:info@presbypeacefellowship.org)  
**Closing Worship** –Join in The Walk's closing worship service on Fri. June 15 at 7pm at Centenary Methodist Church, 55 Plaza Square, St. Louis.

You can also view live-streamed teach-ins and worship from The Walk each night June 1- 15 at [#walk2divest](https://twitter.com/walk2divest) or [pcusawalk.org](http://pcusawalk.org)

## The Presbyterian Peace Fellowship Reflects on One GA Plenary Issue: Climate Change

Addressing climate change requires an unprecedented mobilization of human genius, unity, timeliness and love. We support many of the climate-related proposals before GA, including steps to reduce carbon use by individuals, churches and institutions, as well as support for alternative energy loans, employment and investment. Along with 40 presbyteries, we call upon GA to support Overture 08-01, "Overture on Directing the Board of Pensions and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Foundation to Divest from Fossil Fuels and Actively Invest in Securities that Focus on Renewable Energy."

## Top Five Reasons to Divest from Fossil Fuels Now

**1. Because we believe in God, Creator of heaven and earth.** From the beginning (Genesis 1:28/Genesis 2:15), God calls humanity as stewards of creation, in order to keep the earth a home for all living things. Jesus calls for repentance; when we have gone in a wrong direction, Christ helps us **turn around**. He gives us the courage to act now as the stewards God made us to be.

**2. Because war and violence will be fueled by climate disasters.** Climate change will make food, safe water and habitable land scarcer and costlier, indirectly leading to perpetual violence and war. According to the research of Marshall Burke and Solomon Hsiang, for each half-degree increase in temperature, we can expect a ten to twenty percent increase in armed conflict.<sup>1</sup> With an increase of five degrees, we could see world violence double by the end of this century. The U.S. Department of Defense describes climate change as a "threat multiplier" of poverty, disease, mass displacement, migration and political instability.<sup>2</sup> Climate-caused resource scarcity has already been deadly for the people in Syria, Somalia and other places. In "National Security and the Accelerating Risks of Climate Change," the CNA Advisory Board (retired high-level U.S. military officers) writes: "The extent to which military forces will be used to protect the homeland in response to projected climate change impacts should not be limited by our past history of military deployments or limited by failures of imagination."<sup>3</sup> As peacemakers, we need to act now.

**3. Because time is up to mitigate climate change.** Climate change is coming faster than first predicted. From words now removed from its website under the current EPA administrator, the EPA stated in 2015: "Global temperatures are projected to increase

worldwide by 2° F to 11.5°F by 2100."<sup>4</sup> What does this mean? In a stunning article worth reading by every Presbyterian, David Wallace-Wells organized the scientific literature on what could happen with this increase in heat. His findings go far beyond rising sea levels: "Absent a significant adjustment to how billions of humans conduct their lives, parts of the Earth will likely become close to uninhabitable, and other parts horrifically inhospitable, as soon as the end of this century."<sup>5</sup> There are no "do-overs" with climate change. The fossil fuel industry has known of these dangers since the 1970s and has expended millions of dollars to confuse and deny them. We simply do not have more time to talk with the fossil fuel industry; they must change now.

### **4. Because divestment makes the faithful impact.**

Divestment, not more corporate engagement, will wake up the oil and gas industry from "business as usual." There are many ways we can fight climate change, but divestment is the most direct action the Presbyterian Church as a whole can take. Divestment aligns all our investments with PCUSA policy against investing in ways that harm people. We are powerful when we join over 800 other faith, academic, and philanthropic institutions, with assets of \$6 trillion, to divest from fossil fuels. We have the support of 40 presbyteries that have voted in favor of this.

### **5. Because we need to be at the right table.**

The MRTI report calls us to stay at the table of the oil and gas industry. Is that the right table for us? No. We are called to the table of people who are marginalized, to the table of our siblings in frontline communities who already suffer because of fossil fuels. Proponents of shareholder engagement tell us that divestment means we will shame the industry. Yes, we probably will. But until we divest, we betray Christ's call to care for people who are marginalized and God's call to be stewards. Fossil Fuel divestment is now central to living out our faith. All the good actions and writings of our denomination to respond to climate change are for nothing if we continue to fund the industry that is harming creation.

1 Burke, Solomon and Carleton, "Conflict in a Changing Climate," The European Physical Journal, Spring 2016. [www.stanford.edu/~mburke/papers/Carleton\\_Hsiang\\_Burke2016.pdf](http://www.stanford.edu/~mburke/papers/Carleton_Hsiang_Burke2016.pdf)

2 U.S. Dept of Defense, "2014 Climate Change Roadmap." [www.acq.osd.mil/EIE/Downloads/CCARprint\\_wForward\\_e.pdf](http://www.acq.osd.mil/EIE/Downloads/CCARprint_wForward_e.pdf)

3 [www.cna.org/cna\\_files/pdf/MAB\\_5-8-14.pdf](http://www.cna.org/cna_files/pdf/MAB_5-8-14.pdf)

4 [www.epa.gov/climatechange/science/overview](http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/science/overview) (No longer available on-line)

5 David Wallace-Wells, "The Uninhabitable Earth," [www.nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2017/07/climate-change-earth-too-hot-for-humans-annotated.html](http://www.nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2017/07/climate-change-earth-too-hot-for-humans-annotated.html)