

## Proposed Overture to the San Francisco Presbytery

From: Montclair Presbyterian Church

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

The Presbyteries of San Francisco/San Jose/Redwoods Overture the 224th General Assembly (2020) to declare that we in the United States are at a critical point in our history. At this time values that we strive to live by, many of them based in Christian teaching, are at risk. These values include, but are not limited to:

1. Protecting the earth and all the myriad plants and animals that inhabit the earth
2. Working to overcome the scourge of racism
3. Caring for the needs of the poor
4. Welcoming the stranger and the immigrant
5. Protecting and strengthening our democracy

The Presbyteries of San Francisco/San Jose/Redwoods Overture the 224th General Assembly (2020) further to commit the Presbyterian Church (USA) to take the following actions:

- Call upon all Presbyterians to vote for candidates for every office and in every jurisdiction — including and especially candidates for the office of President of the United States — who by their words and actions have demonstrated that they support and embrace the above stated values.
- Encourage congregations to emphasize these values and priorities as members consider their votes in the upcoming November 2020 elections.
- Request that congregations highlight these values in their ongoing efforts for social justice and human rights.

### **RATIONALE:**

Under the current national administration, efforts which are consistent with these values have eroded. This development is alarming to us, since adherence to these values has always made us stronger as a people and more ethical as a society. The pursuit of these values also serves as an example for the global community, since many countries view the United States as a democratic nation worthy of emulation.

We are well aware that often in the past the church has failed to stand up for these values. For example, during World War II the German Protestant and Catholic Churches were neutral toward or even aligned themselves with the evil regime of Adolf Hitler. Also, during much of this country's history many churches failed to confront the evils of slavery and segregation.

At the same time, we know that the church, as well as individuals within the church, have at times acted in concert with these values. In Germany, Reverend Dietrich Bonhoeffer, seeing the immense evil of the Hitler regime and risking his own life to oppose it, gathered a group of Christians to oppose and overthrow the regime. In our own country, the African-American

churches of the South, under the leadership of Martin Luther King Jr., played a central role in the civil rights movement of the 1960s. We have all been learning from these and other instances to stand up and speak out for justice and human rights.

### **SPECIFIC ACTIONS:**

We strongly encourage our members to support candidates in 2020 who align with the above values and are committed to take some, if not all, of the following actions:

1. Climate change is the existential crisis of our time. Today we are seeing the early signs of an impending global calamity — rising seas, record breaking heat waves, devastating storms and major habitat loss. Increasingly, millions of people, especially poor people in the developing world, are losing their homes, their incomes and even their lives. We need to support candidates who acknowledge the reality of climate change, candidates who will pledge to rejoin the Paris Climate Accord of 2015, and who will lead a nationwide campaign to combat this worldwide threat and build an economy powered by renewable energy.
2. We must address the reality of racism and the many ways in which it continues to undermine our life as a nation. We need to advocate for racial justice and equality. We must pursue policies that reflect these ideals.
3. We must also recognize the reality of poverty in our country. The fact that extreme income inequality, homelessness and economic deprivation exist in a country as rich as ours constitutes a moral outrage. We will embrace policies that promote the goals of universal healthcare, an end to homelessness, and a truly progressive tax code.
4. We must welcome the immigrant. From the very beginning our country has opened its arms to people from other lands — people who were fleeing religious prejudice, economic hardship and violence. Today, across the world, the numbers of these people, especially people seeking asylum, grow exponentially. As a country blessed with immense resources and much good will, we need to play our part in welcoming these immigrants. And we need to remove the recently imposed obstacles to their seeking asylum in our country.
5. Our country was founded on the principles of democracy. But we need to be continually nurturing that democracy — by removing the obstacles to voter registration, making it easier and not harder for people to vote, resisting the gerrymandering of legislative districts, and enacting effective campaign finance reform. Candidates who subscribe to these policies deserve our active support.

In this extraordinary historical moment we ask you to call upon all Presbyterians to align with these values and become actively involved in the 2020 presidential, congressional and local elections so that we may establish our country more firmly on the ground of these important values.

Submitted by Art Paull  
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