

## **People Investing in People**



Sunday, April 8, 2018

# CELEBRATE SDOP SUNDAY

**Promote Justice | Build Stronger Communities | Seek Economic Equity** 

For resources visit pcusa.org/sdop: hymns, liturgical suggestions, stories about community partners and more!

The work of the Presbyterian Committee of the Self-Development of People (SDOP) is about hope. We are about families, communities and the transformation of lives that take place in them. Our slogan "people investing in people," connects directly to our rich history that is firmly rooted in justice for those who are oppressed by poverty and social systems that prevent them from living lives of self-determination. Tackling a difficult and often challenging range of issues such as poverty, mass incarceration, immigration, labor and worker rights, justice for women, earth care and sustainability, we provide tactile and viable ways that the church can partner with communities as they engage in addressing these issues together.

## We Are About Relationships.

In the Gospels, Jesus Christ created relationships by befriending and assisting poor and oppressed people, and taught his followers to do the same. Self Development of People Sunday is a celebration of this powerful act of relationship building in Jesus Christ. As the Body of Christ, we are called to be unified in faith and action through sharing our resources to confront poverty and promote economic empowerment. In this resource, we offer several powerful stories of community building, self-reliance, and hope – these are stories of God in action. In lifting up these stories, I pray that they will inspire, encourage and energize you and your congregation to be engaged in faith and dedicated in your support. I pray that these stories will also encourage you to engage in this important work of hope with us.

Rev. Alonzo Johnson, Coordinator of the Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People

"He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" - Micah 6: 8



SDOP is a ministry that affirms God's concern for humankind. We are Presbyterians and ecumenical partners dissatisfied with poverty and oppression, united in faith and action through sharing, confronting, and enabling by participating in the empowerment of economically poor, oppressed, and disadvantaged people, seeking to change the structures that perpetuate poverty, oppression and injustice.

## Promote Justice... Build Stronger Communities... Seek Equity

#### **Promote Justice**

Amos 5:24 – "Let justice run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream."

### **Build Stronger Communities**

Isaiah 65: 21-22 – "And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands."

## **Seek Economic Equity**

Matthew 20: 1-16 – "As a symbol for God, a landowner is persistently seeking laborers for his vineyard. What he promises each, regardless of how long they work, is enough wages to provide for life. This is not a parable about how to run a business but a parable that exposes the radical generosity of God and God's deep concern that everyone be able to sustain life."



## **HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE / HOW YOUR CONGREGATION CAN HELF**

- Invite participants of a nearby Self-Development of People (SDOP) project to offer a "Minute for Mission" during your Sunday worship service. Contact the national SDOP office to learn of community partners in your area.
- If your Presbytery/Synod has a SDOP Committee (call the national office to find out if a committee exists in your mid council), invite one of its members to speak during your worship service. Call the national office to learn if there are national committee members in your area who could be invited to speak to your congregation).
  - Mid council (local) SDOP committee members or anyone can promote the resource (i.e. Social Justice Committee, Mission Committee, etc.), you do not have to be a pastor to do so. But it is always encouraged to bring the resource to your pastor's attention.
- We encourage you to include this resource in newsletters, articles etc.
- Mid council committees can share their own experiences as they promote the resource.



If you are a national or mid council SDOP committee member:

- You can call pastors and other church leaders to remind them of SDOP Sunday and the materials available.
- Take pictures if you are meeting with local groups, or if you are present at SDOP events. We encourage you to also take pictures if possible when a local group or a representative of SDOP speaks in a congregation, Presbytery or other venues. Send us copies of those pictures so that we too can lift up what you are doing for SDOP Sunday.
- SDOP is supported by generous gifts to the One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS). Contribute to:

OGHS Self-Development of People online OG200000, by phone call 800-872-3283 or to send a check, please designate where you want your gift to go on the memo line and mail to:

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), P.O. Box 643700 Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3700

## Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People Partners with Grassroots Fishing Group in Barranco, Toledo, Belize

## **Barranco FisherFolks Cooperative**

The Barranco FisherFolks Cooperative is an economic development project. Group members have engaged in training to increase their capacity to work together as fisher folks by cultivating a conservation area and receiving cooperative and leadership development training. This project makes it possible for these low-income group members to purchase fishing equipment to compete fairly with better equipped fishing groups. The grant also provides an opportunity for the group to process and store perishable products prior to taking them to market.

#### Fact:

- The national poverty rate in Belize is 41% (Source: UNDP- http://www.bz.undp.org/)
- Since its inception in 1970, SDOP has supported more than 5,600 projects in 67 countries, awarding more than \$100 million in grant funding.





## Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People Partnership with Low Income Community Groups in Liberia and Sierra Leone Seeks to Bring Economic Equality

#### **West Africa Initiative**

The West Africa Initiative is a collaboration amongst Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, Presbyterian Hunger Program and Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People, and various ecumenical partners. The initiative seeks to improve the food security and economic status of communities, families and individuals through technical training, follow up technical support and small grants for project activities.

#### Fact:

- There are over 450 West Africa Initiative (WAI) group members in Liberia and more than 700 in Sierra Leone. With family members, more than 10,000 persons are directly benefitting from this joint project.
- West Africa Initiative groups have engaged in economic development activities including selling palm oil and cultivating Moringa. Moringa has medicinal benefits, it is used to lower high blood pressure.
- WAI was one of 800 programs from 113 countries selected to receive the prestigious Equator Initiative Award in June 2012 during the U.N. Conference on Sustainable Development.



## Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People New Orleans Partnership **Encourages Community Residents to Improve their Health through Healthy Food Access**

## **The ReFresh Project Community Farm**

The ReFresh Project Community Farm project is a neighborhood managed garden in the heart of New Orleans, Louisiana. Completely operated and maintained by active and engaged community members, the garden aims to improve health equity in the surrounding area and provide access to health resources that the community has specifically said it lacks. Through funding from SDOP and other generous sources, the ReFresh Project Community Farm can grow and continue to meet the needs of a historically underserved but culturally rich and incredibly important area of New Orleans. The garden's programming, infrastructure, organizing and general operation relies entirely on funding from organizations like SDOP. The ReFresh Project Community Farm and the community it serves are grateful for the support.

#### **Fact:**

- This project provides healthy food access to Treme and Mid City neighborhoods which will help to increase quality of life and life expectancy for these residents.
- In 2016, the Refresh Project Community Farm, in collaboration with other community organizations, taught more than 50 people how to grow their own food.



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## Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People Albany, Georgia Youth Project **Seeks to keep Performing Arts Program Alive**

## **The Sounds of Joy Performing Arts Program**

The Sounds of Joy Performing Arts Program has been around for the past six years seeking to advance human dignity through arts. The recent involvement and support of SDOP will aid this community program in providing an opportunity for at-risk youth to participate in cultural enrichment programs to include theatre, vocal performance and dance. Thanks to SDOP, youth in the Albany area, many of which have limited resources and live in poverty, will have an opportunity to find dignity and value through the arts. Further, the SDOP grant will allow the continuation of participants in the Sounds of Joy Program the autonomy to develop and create the program in a manner that will meet their individual needs.

#### Fact:

• More than 150 low-income at-risk youth in Albany, GA have participated in the Sounds of Joy Performing Arts Program in the past five years.



## Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People Partnership with West Philadelphia Black Male Youth Focuses on Education

## **Exploring Educational Opportunities - Black Male Leadership** Initiative

The Black Male Leadership Initiative is comprised of economically disadvantaged African American young men. They seek to advance themselves educationally, personally and economically through lectures, workshops and field trips. The project is meant to fill a cultural gap in learning and exposure that is perpetuated by poverty and racism. The Philadelphia Presbytery SDOP Committee partnered with the project by awarding it a grant.

#### Fact:

- Read about Freedom Rising, a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) initiative "to address and improve the worsening plight of the African-American male," at https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ story/freedom-rising-gains-traction-pilot-cities/.
- Did you know Philadelphia Presbytery has a Self-Development of People Committee? Email databaseadministrator@presbyphl.org to be connected to the committee and learn how you can be involved in efforts to partner with economically disadvantaged community groups.



pcusa.org/sdop

# Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People Senior Center Project Seeks to reach Seniors and Entire Calumet, MI Community

## **Calumet Laurium Holistic Senior Center**

The Calumet Laurium Holistic Senior Center project is a senior citizen center started by and run by low-income and handicapped senior citizens, many with diabetes, to help themselves overcome isolation and develop better self-care through diabetes education and fitness. The senior center welcomes everyone in the community. Through interviews with local newspapers and TV stations the members encourage volunteers and the community to join the center.

#### Fact:

• The Calumet and Laurium Holistic Senior Center is actively seeking to let community residents know it is not just for seniors but seeks to serve the entire community.



## Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People Akron, Ohio Project Supports **Returning Citizens Artisan Group**

## **Not Wasted Project**

Not Wasted is a microeconomic development project where women learn responsibility, organization, teamwork, workplace success, sewing and hand crafting skills while creating unique products from recycled materials. Not Wasted offers employment skills training and funding to "at risk" and "underemployed" women. The Not Wasted participant is a woman released from incarceration or recovering from addiction. They are in a transitional housing situation.

#### Fact:

- Not Wasted uses recycled products from bike chains to make jewelry and art and billboard vinyl to make bags and bibs.
- Did you know Eastminster Presbytery has a Self-Development of People Committee? Email cathy@eastminsterpresbytery.org to be connected to the committee and learn how you can be involved in efforts to partner with economically disadvantaged community groups.
- There are approximately 40 certified mid council SDOP Committees across the U.S. If you are interested in starting one contact margaret.mwale@pcusa.org or Alonzo.johnson@pcusa.org.



### WORSHIP RESOURCES FOR SDOP SUNDAY

#### **CALL TO WORSHIP**

**Leader**: Let us pray for those in the world who are suffering, in places nearby and in far-away

countries:

**People**: God of mercy, hear our prayers

Leader: For those whose lives and futures are uncertain

**People**: God of creation, hear our prayers

Leader: For the people where poverty is widespread and whose citizens long for relief and the

opportunity to develop their own solutions;

**People**: God of justice hear our prayers

**Leader**: For those who seek comfort and hope in the face of despair;

People: God of healing and compassion, hear our prayers

**Leader**: For the people who face discrimination and lack of opportunity;

**People**: God of empowerment, hear our prayers

**Leader**: For those in places where needs are unimaginably great and sufferings are unspeakable;

**People**: God of peace, hear our prayers

All: God of life, help us to be your messengers for unity and love in all that we do, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

#### **INVOCATION**

God of justice, compassion and peace, we come before you this morning in a spirit of gratitude and praise. As we gather in our communities of faith, we give thanks for the gifts of calm hearts and still minds, given to us through the presence of your Holy Spirit, as we hear your message and receive your guidance. Remind us, Lord, of our connectedness and our responsibilities to each other. As we gather in worship, may your divine love inspire us to lead lives of kindness, peace and justice. May your Holy Spirit bring hope and empowerment to communities of need everywhere, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

#### **CALL TO CONFESSION**

Offered by: REV. REBECCA REYES (SDOP National Committee Chairperson)

As we approach this time of confession anoint us with a Spirit of courage to do kindness, grace to accept others and wisdom to walk humbly with you. Creator and Sustainer of all life and activity, we come at this moment to confess the hurt we have caused to ourselves, to our neighbors and to our world. We come to confess our actions of disrespect to each other, our lack of kindness to strangers and our forgetfulness of your grace and love.

In your mercy, we pray. Amen.

#### PRAYER OF CONFESSION:

God of all nations, we praise you that in Christ the barriers that have separated humanity are torn down.

In Jesus, you have shown us how to be generous.

Yet, we confess to you our share of the guilt for a world filled with injustices, poverty and great suffering.

Forgive us for our self-centeredness, and grant that both our church and our nation may respond in kind to the cries of those in need. For the sake of Jesus Christ . . . AMEN

#### **ASSURANCE OF PARDON:**

Hear the good news of the Gospel:

The God who challenges us is also the God who encourages us . . .

The God who confronts us is also the God who accepts us . . .

Be assured that God is with us, accepting, guiding, and forgiving.

Thanks be to God . . . AMEN

#### **SERMON**

"Always with Us"

Matthew 26:6-13

Sermon by Rev. Jan Edmiston, Co-Moderator of 222nd General assembly, PC(USA)

Now while Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment, and she poured it on his head as he sat at the table. But when the disciples saw it, they were angry and said, "Why this waste? For this ointment could have been sold for a large sum, and the money given to the poor." But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? She has performed a good service for me. For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. By pouring this ointment on my body she has prepared me for burial. Truly I tell you, wherever this good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her."

There was an article in The Washington Post last year that rattled me a little. The headline blasted:

## Christians are more than twice as likely to blame a person's poverty on lack of effort

Really? Think about the poor people you know. Maybe they are members of your congregation. Maybe they are your neighbors or your co-workers or members of your family. Do you believe they are poor because of "lack of effort."?

Maybe you don't know anyone who would be considered "poor."

Presbyterians – in general – tend to be more prosperous and better educated than many Christian traditions and throughout many of our congregations, the rich and the poor do not inter-mingle much, except when prosperous parishioners volunteer at a homeless shelter or soup kitchen. And in those situations, relationships tend to be rather shallow and impersonal.

According to 2016 census figures, 40.6 million people - or 12.7 percent of the US population live in poverty. This means that in 2016, a family of four making less than \$24,250 was considered below the poverty line in the 48 contiguous states. (The poverty assessment is different for Alaska and Hawaii.)

- Is it because people are lazy? If they just worked harder, if they didn't depend on handouts they wouldn't be poor.
- Is it because of life circumstances? *Some people just can't catch a break.*
- Is it because creation is fallen and the world is lost? People just need to get saved because what really matters is the next life.

How we see the poor depends on our theology and our politics and our own life experiences. If I pulled myself up by my own bootstraps, you can too!

This is all very interesting in light of Matthew's gospel.

We shouldn't be surprised to find Jesus at the home of a leper. This is the end of his ministry and he already had a reputation for spending time in the homes of tax collectors and women. Why not a leper? He had already shocked the Pharisees as well as his own followers with the company he

Jesus was lounging at table on something more like a sofa than a dining room chair when an unnamed woman approached him and poured expensive perfume on his head. Maybe we've heard this story so many times that we have stopped thinking this is strange.

Who really wants oil poured on your head while sitting there among friends? It doesn't say they were actually eating dinner which would have been even messier.

But this anointing caused a stir. The woman never said a word but the men immediately expressed their indignance. Everybody was talking about her. Nobody really talked to her.

And then Jesus says a phrase that would be dissected and quoted for generations to come: Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will al-

ways have with you, but you will not always have me.

In the first year Denise Anderson and I served as Co-Moderators of the General Assembly, we asked the denomination to read the book Waking Up White in the hopes that we would share our personal stories about race, after reading Debby Irving's spiritual memoir in which she wakes up to the fact that having white skin has given her advantages in life.

In our second year, Denise and I have suggested that everybody read the book Always with Us by Liz Theoharis. In this book, Dr. Theoharis who – with Dr. William Barber is co-directing the New Poor People's Campaign this year - analyzes what Jesus was talking about in light of his words about the poor throughout scripture.

Were these disciples right? Was the unnamed woman a poor steward, wasting precious perfume on Jesus instead of selling it to give the proceeds to the poor?

Was Jesus declaring a fact of life - that there will always be poor people and there's not much we can do about it?

Or was Jesus saying is that "the poor will always be with us" because even those of us who try to follow Jesus tend to be blind to the ways that we keep poor people down?

I know a congregation in a poor rural town where almost everyone qualified to receive government support – including the pastor. But the people were also generous. Even those who struggled would - once a year - donate their used clothing and shoes to the church to sell in a massive rummage sale with all proceeds going to the poor.

Volunteers worked for weeks organizing the clothing in the fellowship hall by sizes and seasons.

 $<sup>1\</sup> https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2017/08/03/christians-are-more-than-twice-as-likely-to-blame-a-per-more-than-twice-a-per-more-than-twice-a-per-more-than-twice-a-per-more-than-twice-a-per-more-than-twice-a-per-more-than-twice-a-per-more-than-twice-a-per-more$ sons-poverty-on-lack-of-effort/?utm\_term=.ffdb17c92f95

By the first Saturday in October, they would be ready to sell the items for about a dollar a piece and then all the money would go to a shelter in a neighboring town.

But the night before the big rummage sale one year, there was a fire in town. A young woman had been living in an old rental house and – in the middle of the night – a fire had destroyed everything she'd owned. She and her two children got out wearing only their nightclothes.

The pastor was awakened in the night by the fire chief who asked if she could help in some way.

It was already sweater weather, if not coat weather – and Shelley\* and her children were wearing lightweight pajamas. But – thanks be to God – the local Presbyterian Church had a fellowship hall full of clothes! The pastor invited the fire chief to bring Shelley and her children over to pick out a few things.

They found shoes that didn't fit perfectly but they were better than nothing. They each picked out two warm outfits to get them through the next couple days.

It was great! This is what the Church does, right? Christians step in and help!

But the next morning brought a more shocking jolt than even the fact that someone had lost all their possessions in a house fire.

At the rummage sale the next morning, word had already gotten out that the pastor and the fire chief had allowed Shelley -

- ...who wasn't even a church member...
- ...who had two children by two different men...
- ...who had never been married to either of those men...

to come into their sale before it was even open to the general public and been given her three pairs of shoes and several items of clothing. And she hadn't even paid for anything.

Didn't she know that the proceeds were going to the poor?

Ugh. Sometimes even we who call ourselves Christian seem to miss the point as surely as the disciples reclining with Jesus in Simon the leper's living room.

Maybe we need to wake up to notice the poor around us. Maybe we need to understand the structures that keep people poor. Maybe we – as Christians – need to educate ourselves on what Jesus really meant when he said "the poor will always be with you."

I believe that God doesn't condemn certain people to lifelong poverty. I believe that God knows that we – his children – will do little to end poverty for our neighbors. But we can change this narrative. We have the power to change this narrative.

Dr. Martin Luther King said that "True compassion is more than flinging a coin to the beggar. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring."

My friends, our souls need to be restructured so that we will have the capacity to change the structures around us that keep people impoverished. What will it take?

- It will take energy, intelligence, imagination and love.
- It will take a clear vision of what Jesus calls us to be and do in his name.

It will take a personal decision to accept the call of Jesus. At our own tables, we don't have ex-

Note the reclining at table in Mark 14:17, Luke 22:14, and John 13:23. The Greek word here is ἀνάκειμαι (anakeimai) which means to "lay" or "recline" as at a dinner table.

pensive oil to offer. But we do have the power to be the kind of Church that works not merely for the poor but – more faithfully – with the poor in hopes of bringing everyone into the abundant life Jesus promises.

#### **CHARGE**

Go now in peace. Be a servant to both those you know and love, and to those who are strangers. Be a witness to God's compassion for all people. Be a worker for God's justice, and a partner in the self-development of people.

#### **BENEDICTION**

Go now in the name of God, in whose image we are all made; and in the name of Jesus Christ, who knew everyone as a neighbor; and in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, who gives equal comfort to those who have all that they need and those who need much. Amen.

#### **SDOP HYMNS**

Two hymns celebrate SDOP's ministry. The first was written in 1996 by Jane Parker Huber; the second in 2008, by John A. Dalles. Both are included here, with permission to reproduce for ONE-TIME worship use. Other suggested hymns:

Canto de Esperanza (Song of Hope) I Am Gonna Live So God Can Use Me Cuando el Pobre (When the Poor Ones)

## **CALL TO ACTION / GET INVOLVED WITH PRESBYTERIAN** COMMITTEE ON THE SELF-DEVELOPMENT



- Consider giving to the One Great Hour of Sharing, a special offering taken up during Lent to support Self-Development of People, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance and Presbyterian Hunger Program. Visit http://specialofferings.pcusa.org/oghs.html to learn more about the OGHS offering and/or to give.
- Consider giving directly to SDOP. Your gift together with others makes it possible for thousands of communities all over the world to have an opportunity to take control of their own destinies and develop solutions to their own challenges. The power of your giving is in the fact that it gives hope, meaning and purpose to people who for one reason or another find themselves in hopeless situations.
- Invite SDOP committee members or staff to speak to your congregation, presbytery/synod meetings, mission fair, etc.
- Learn more about SDOP's international projects in Belize and the latest on the West African Initiative.
- Serve on the SDOP committee within the bounds of your Presbytery or Synod, if there is not a committee, consider establishing one.
- Submit a form to the General Assembly nominating committee to serve on the National SDOP Committee. Email valerie.small@pcusa.org
- Invite a SDOP group in your area to share about its project with your congregation.
- Share a minute for mission about SDOP with your congregation.

#### Questions?

English - 800-728-7228 x 5781/5792 Spanish -800-728-7228 x5781/5790 Email: margaret.mwale@pcusa.org

Fax: (502) 569-8001

## FREE SELF-DEVELOPMENT OF PEOPLE RESOURCES

On the Self-Development of People website, pcusa.org/sdop, you will find stories about SDOP community partners, and a variety of resources, including:

• Sermons and Liturgy (which you can use to plan your Sunday worship service), and

The following print resources can be ordered by calling the Presbyterian Distribution Center at 800-524-2612:

- SDOP Trifold Brochure PDS #25422-17-001 (includes basic information needed to apply for a grant and stories about SDOP partners).
- Wallet card PDS #25422-07-001 (includes basic information about SDOP in a wallet size card).
- Poster Celebrate Hope PDS # 74350-05-005 (colorful SDOP poster).

Call the national office for additional printed resources 1-888-728-7228 ext. 5781 or 5792.

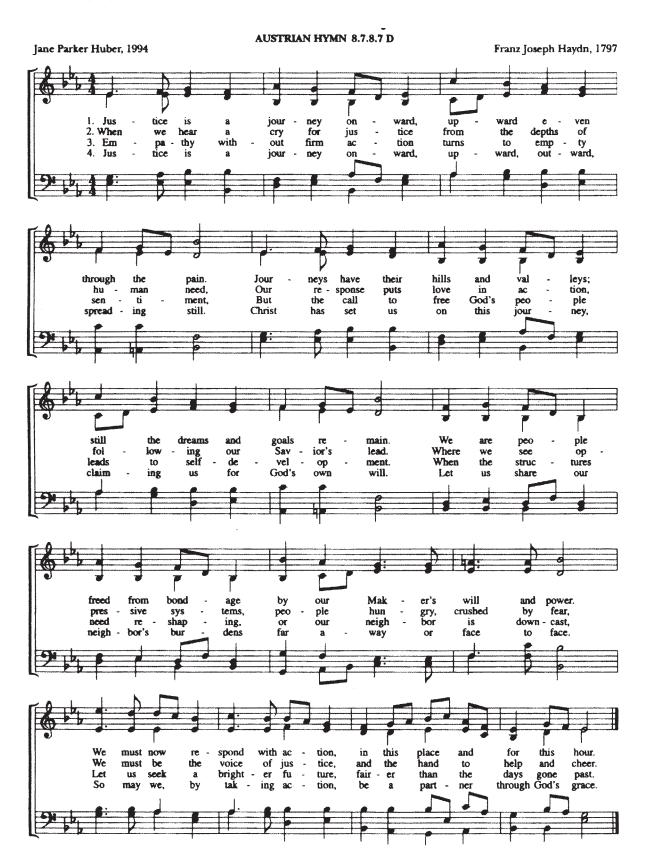
## **Suggested Reading List:**

- Always with Us? What Jesus Really Said about the Poor by Liz Theoharis
- •The New Jim Crow by Michelle Alexander
- •From Dream to Reality by James A. Gittings

## **CELEBRATE HOPE!**



## **JUSTICE IS A JOURNEY ONWARD**











For resources visit pcusa.org/sdop: hymns, liturgical suggestions, stories about community partners and more!

1-800-728-7228 ext. 5781 www.pcusa.org/sdop

Self-Development Of People Ministry