



# PHP POST

Spring 2017 | Presbyterian Hunger Program | [pcusa.org/hunger](http://pcusa.org/hunger)

Confronting the “isms”

## Confronting Injustice

Rev. Jimmie Hawkins, Director for the Office of Public Witness

I became involved in the Moral Monday Movement on April 28th of 2013. Rev. William Barber II was in Durham, N.C. where I was pastor of Covenant Presbyterian preaching at Pilgrim United Church of Christ. At the service’s end, he asked if there was anyone there willing to participate in Civil Disobedience the next day in the North Carolina General Assembly building to stand up against recent immoral actions of the state legislature. In its first fifty days the NC legislature had cut social programs, eliminated the Racial Justice Act, cut teachers and teacher assistants, and become the only state to refuse federal unemployment benefits. But for me, the final straw was the refusal to expand Medicaid through the Affordable Care Act, causing 500,000 North Carolinians eligible for health care to be denied.

I knew Barber and knew that his call that day at the end of worship was a covert message that someone was going to jail for justice. On April 29th, 17 of us were arrested, handcuffed and sent to the newly constructed detention center. We really didn’t know if our actions would strike a chord in the hearts of NC, or if this would be the first prophetic response being put forth by the General Assembly in response to the draconian laws.

Our seemingly small effort, which was mocked by legislators who called us “Moron Monday” and “out-of-town agitators” soon



Office of Public Witness

Rev. Jimmie R. Hawkins, director for the Office of Public Witness, marches in the N.C. NAACP Moral Monday March with 80,000 people of faith from around the country.

took on a life of its own. Each subsequent week the numbers arrested grew until by summer’s end, almost 1,000 individuals had offered themselves up for arrest. Tens of thousands demonstrated and cheered as we marched into the building Monday after Monday. Shouts of “Forward Together, Not One Step Back” and “This is what Democracy looks like” reverberated. Numerous coalitions of non-profits and community groups showed up each week. In normally conservative Asheville N.C. ten thousand western North Carolinians provided the clearest signal that something of significance was occurring.

This movement was not just a political movement, it was a spiritual one. Moral Monday was led by clergy from a vast diversity of faiths. Most of the first arrestees were Christian ministers who offered themselves for the cause of justice. On June 10th, the Rev. Rodney Sadler and I rallied hundreds of clergy and led

them in prophetic protest. The crowds consisted of Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Baptists, Disciples, Holiness, Unitarian, Jewish and others.

For many, Moral Monday was their church. Sermons were as common as political speeches. The shofar was blown, the torah was read, spirituals were sung, and scriptures were proclaimed: Isaiah 10:1, “woe to those who make unjust laws...” and Matthew 25, “I was hungry and you fed me...” It was a revival which served to rejuvenate the spirits of many who were frustrated, angry and anguishing over feelings of powerlessness, those who questioned what was happening in their state. Long considered one of the most moderate and progressive of all southern states, North Carolina was now one of the

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## Confronting the “isms” as People of Faith

By Rebecca Barnes, Coordinator, Presbyterian Hunger Program

Presbyterian Hunger Program’s goal is to engage in Christ’s ministry by “alleviating hunger and eliminating its root causes.” This Christian mission takes many forms. It includes local congregations who plant community gardens, serve community meals and stock food pantries. It includes efforts in the U.S. to protect workers, to advocate for children’s nutrition, and to challenge food policies that leave some areas “food deserts” while others have too many resources. Our work also includes international partners who protect seeds, cherish land, and empower farming and mining communities as they seek to keep their natural resources from being extracted, polluted, and privatized for corporate profit.

One of the root causes of hunger, we’ve come to learn, is an un-holy power imbalance. A main reason that some people are poor and hungry is that others have more than their share—whether that un-holy abundance is in the hands of corporations, governments, or individuals. This power imbalance is related to a seemingly unquenchable thirst for power in some—be it military, economic or political power that is sought.

Like the money changers in the temple, we are seduced or stuck in systems of domination that leave some people

unfairly uplifted and some people unfairly depressed. Jesus, who turns unjust tables upside down, calls us to God’s purposes. Christ calls us to prayerful work for God’s realm, where no one will hunger or thirst.

We humbly offer ourselves for God’s redeeming work in the world, even if it means examining the worst parts of ourselves and/or our cherished institutions.

As Christians, we confess. We name the sin and the powers and principalities that trap us and keep us from God’s vision for the world. In corporate worship, Presbyterians confess weekly, trusting that God who created the world in love will also call us back to that love and redeem the places where all has gone terribly wrong.

And, at the same time, we challenge ourselves not to fall into a second trap of “cheap grace.” We don’t ask for forgiveness without doing the work to let ourselves

be transformed. We invite the Spirit to work in us for God’s justice and love to flow throughout God’s creation. We repent, which includes an active turning away from sin and towards God. We humbly offer ourselves for God’s redeeming work in the world, even if it means examining the worst parts of ourselves and/or our cherished institutions.

So when we confess that “enslaving poverty in a world of abundance is an intolerable violation of God’s good creation” (Book of Confessions 9.46), we are naming a truth before God while simultaneously calling ourselves to repent and to remember: “the cause of the world’s poor is the cause of [Jesus’] disciples.”

One way that we turn away from sin and towards God is to confront the many “isms” that skew power and lead to hunger in our world—“isms” that feed a destructive thirst for accumulation of wealth, military might, and racial privilege. In this issue of PHP Post, we are exploring what it means to name and then confront the “isms.”

We confess the ways these “isms” trap us, we invite God to free us for Christ’s ministry, and we offer ourselves to be filled by the Spirit for an unleashing of our better selves and a better world.

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# Standing Rock: A Call For All People

Rev. Dr. Nedly Astudillo, Pastor of San Jose parish, a Lutheran and Presbyterian Latino community in Beloit, WI.



Nedly Astudillo

Marching in the Native Nations March on Washington, D.C.

My family, as most families in Latin America, was founded in the stories of two grandmothers. One, a European immigrant who liked bathing with milk to brighten her white skin. Another, an indigenous Amazonian who preferred bathing in the river to maintain her connection with Earth. I was never told the name of my first grandmother, but the latter was named Diosgracia (God's grace).

In today's struggle to protect Earth from unrestrained exploitation, and in finding my place as an immigrant in this land, I feel called to be like Diosgracia -- connecting with God's grace on Earth in all ways possible, accepting Jesus' invitation to watch the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, and find my contentment, hope and peace, so all the other beautiful things God created can also have a long lasting life on Earth.

My European identity is also at work in me. With the white skin I inherited

came a secondary gift I have learned to know as white privilege. The power that comes with being white in this land can contribute to the beauty, or the demise, of Earth and her creatures. I have seen it first hand as an immigrant in the U.S. And so I need to stay attentive to my privilege and how it impacts those around me, and then to use my given gift to protect the source of beauty and joy both my grandmothers enjoyed through the gifts Earth had for each of them.

Standing with Standing Rock while being a Latina immigrant therefore becomes a natural act for me. It is about defending Diosgracia and her worldview, so her offspring may continue bathing in clean rivers and stay connected to Earth.

Standing Rock is also about honoring my European grandmother, her immigrant story, her courage to migrate, and defending the right God gives all people to love Earth, our common home.

Arriving at the Washington National

Cathedral in D.C. for the prayer vigil and then marching in the Native Nations March, I found myself surrounded by a sea of faces like my grandmothers'— native peoples standing tall, white allies along in support, black and brown too. I had never been to Standing Rock, but now I feel I've been bathed in its culture like Diosgracia in the river. "You should not had closed Standing Rock," the sign of a young girl at the march read: "Now, we are all here." Yes, Standing Rock is here. It is everywhere. It is inviting all people of good faith to consider our place, to connect with our roots, and to find our place on this land, in a way that our life and that of future generations can be sustained.

As Episcopalian Priest John Floberg told a group of faith allies right before the march, "You do not have to go to Standing Rock to stand with Native people. Remember that wherever you live in this country, you are on indigent land. Learn about the hopes and struggles of the Native people closest to you, and learn how they would like you to stand with them."

## 10 Self-Care Tips for Activists

1. Laugh
2. Turn off electronics an hour before bed
3. Dance & sing
4. Meditate & Pray
5. Sleep
6. Eat well
7. Drink water
8. Exercise
9. Garden
10. Get out in nature

# Racism and An Apology to U.S. citizens of Native American Ancestry

222nd GA (2016) Overture 65 (Business Item #11-08) from the Presbytery of Baltimore

We apologize for the pain and suffering that our church's involvement in the Indian boarding school system has caused. We are aware of some of the damage that this cruel and ill-conceived system of assimilation has perpetrated on United States citizens of Native American ancestry. For this we are truly and most humbly sorry.

To those individuals who were physically, sexually, and emotionally abused as students of the Indian boarding schools in which the PC(USA)<sup>3</sup> was involved, we offer you our most sincere apology. You did nothing wrong; you were and are the victims of evil acts that cannot under any circumstances be justified or excused.

We know that many within our church will still not understand why each of us must bear the scar, the blame for this horrendous period in U.S. history. But the truth is, we are the bearers of many blessings from our ancestors, and therefore, we must also bear their burdens.

Our burdens include dishonoring the depths of the struggles of Native American people and the richness of your gifts. Therefore, we confess to you that when our Presbyterian ancestors journeyed to this land within the last few centuries, we did not respect your own indigenous knowledges and epistemologies as valid.

In our zeal to tell you of the good news of Jesus Christ, our hearts and minds were closed to the value of your own epistemologies and lifeways. We did not understand the full extent of the Gospel of Christ! We should have affirmed the commonality between your spirituality and our understanding that God's sovereignty extends with length from East to West, with breadth from North to



Office of General Assembly

PC(USA) leaders issue apology to Native Americans, Alaska natives, and native Hawaiians.

South, with depth throughout the Earth, and with height throughout the Sky and Heavens.

Even worse, we arrogantly thought that Western European culture and cultural expressions were necessary parts of the Gospel of Christ. We imposed our civilization as a condition for your accepting the Gospel. We tried to make you be like us and, in so doing, we helped to diminish the Sacred Vision that made you who you are. Thus, we demonstrated that we did not fully understand the Gospel we were trying to preach.

We know that apology is only a first step in the larger hope of repentance and reconciliation. We seek the guidance of relationships with your people within and beyond our church as we seek to identify and act on restorative practices and policies at the relational, communal, and national level.

We are in the midst of a long and painful

journey as we reflect on the cries that we did not or would not hear, and how we have behaved as a church. As we travel this difficult road of repentance, reconciliation, and healing, we commit ourselves to work toward ensuring that we will never again use our power as a church to hurt others with our attitudes of racial and spiritual superiority.

We seek God's forgiveness, healing grace, and guidance as we take steps toward building mutually respectful, compassionate, and loving relationships with indigenous peoples.

We also seek your forgiveness and hope you will walk together with us in the Spirit of Christ and partner with us as equals as we participate in God's redemption of the world so that our peoples may be blessed and God's creation healed.

Finally, we pray that you will hear the sincerity of these words and that you will witness the living out of our apology in our actions in the future.

# Materialism and Land Grabs: A Case Study

Andrew Kang Bartlett, National Hunger Concerns, PHP

Could you be investing in environmental destruction and not know it? Pension funds are the largest sector of the U.S. financial industry, and U.S. Americans have over \$4 trillion invested through 401k retirement funds. If you are lucky enough to have a pension and you are in an academic, research, medical or cultural field, your assets are likely managed by TIAA (formerly TIAA-CREF). TIAA serves over five million active and retired employees.

TIAA is the largest global purchaser of land in the United States and in countries such as Brazil, Guatemala, Indonesia, Uganda and more. TIAA buys up land in many parts of the world, often without proper consultation from local communities. TIAA has invested more than \$500 million in palm oil companies. Establishing palm oil plantations involves burning down the rainforest, whose rich environments sustain uncounted species and indigenous peoples that live in and around them. In the U.S., they have over \$4 billion invested in farmland. This speculation pushes up prices, which often makes farming unviable for beginning and long-term family farmers. These are collectively known as land grabs.

Land investments can be very profitable, but the downsides can be deforestation and the destruction of sacred ecosystems, including those endangered wildlife. Land grabs often take land out of the hands of family farmers and provide only a small number of low-paying, dangerous plantation jobs, as small farms are plowed over to create giant soy, sugar or palm plantations.

Our partners, from Haiti to India and from Lesotho to Korea, have explained to PHP staff that “Land is Life.” They refer to the sacred practice of caring for the land, building the soil, saving and exchanging the best seeds for each unique locale and micro-climate, and growing food and renewable products for



Victor Barro / FOE Spain



Cristiano Navarro

Indigenous communities have been displaced from their land by the expansion of agribusiness in Brazil.

one’s family and surrounding communities. By contrast, the clear cutting and burning of carbon-rich peat lands, the drenching of single crops with agricultural poisons, and the subsequent devastation to local agrarian economies is a death-dealing venture.

## TIAA and Land Grabs in Brazil

TIAA’s land grabs in Brazil abundantly illustrate this death-dealing approach. Maria Luisa Mendonça, Director of the Network

for Social Justice and Human Rights in Brazil, is speaking about the impact of TIAA in Brazil at Ecumenical Advocacy Days.

She says that in Brazil alone, TIAA owns over 617,750 acres of farmland that has resulted in increased land conflicts and displacement of small farmers and indigenous communities. TIAA holdings in the vast northeastern

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## » TAKE ACTION

PC(USA) policy asks Presbyterians to “advocate with multinational corporations, as shareholder and/or board member and/or food consumers, on behalf of family farmers and ranchers.” So far PHP and the campaign coalition have collected 2,500 signatures of clients of TIAA on a letter we will deliver in late spring, and more than 35,000 people have signed the general letter. You can add your name on either letter at [bit.ly/TIAAact](http://bit.ly/TIAAact). Please spread the word to other TIAA clients -- and to everyone.

See the online Deforestation Free Funds at [bit.ly/fundsFOE](http://bit.ly/fundsFOE) with 6,500 funds listed to see which have holdings in palm oil producers linked to deforestation. Contact [php@pcusa.org](mailto:php@pcusa.org) for more on TIAA.

# CONFRONT THE “ISMS” AND TAKE ACTION!



While there is no “right way” to challenge all of the “isms” we face, here are a few suggestions to consider — both personal and congregational. Recognize the ways in which you may perpetuate — knowingly or unknowingly — the “isms.” Encourage your congregation to understand and confront racism, militarism and materialism. Advocate on behalf of those most impacted. Wherever you are on this journey, start there and take the next step! As Maya Angelou writes, “Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.”

## Racism

*“In following Christ the church must witness against all the powerful and privileged who selfishly seek their own interests and thus control and harm others.”* The Belhar Confession

### Personal

- Listen to those to whom you report personal & systemic racism.
- Do the work of unpacking how racism manifests itself in you.

## Militarism

*“In a broken and fearful world the Spirit gives us courage to pray without ceasing, to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior, to unmask idolatries in Church and culture, to hear the voices of peoples long silenced, and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace.”* (Book of Confessions, *A Brief Statement of Faith*, 10.4, Lines 65–71)

## Materialism

*“Justice today requires participation, the inclusion of all members of the human family in obtaining and enjoying the Creator’s gifts for sustenance. Justice also means sufficiency, a standard upholding the claim of all to have enough — to be met through equitable sharing and organized efforts to achieve that end.”* Restoring Creation, 202nd General Assembly

• Say something - it can be as simple as, "What you just said could be offensive."

### Congregational

- Learn about racism where you live.
- Learn about racism where you live, and host an anti-racism training through:
  - PCUSA resources facing-racism.pcusa.org; for training contact mark.koenig@pcusa.org
  - Showing Up for Racial Justice- [www.showingupforracialjustice.org](http://www.showingupforracialjustice.org)
  - Crossroads Antiracism Organizing & Training <http://crossroadsantiracism.org>
- Attend advocacy training weekend to learn ways to address these issues. <http://bit.ly/2j0wQ6m>

### Advocacy

- Contact your elected officials to advocate for non-discriminatory and affirmative action policies in education, employment, policing, and prisons.
- Participate in anti-racist community events, protests, or rallies.
- Vote!

### Personal

- Defuse conflict, bridge divides, and reduce fear and alienation through the practice of respectful and non-violent communication (NVC). Learn about NVC at [bit.ly/non-violent-comm](http://bit.ly/non-violent-comm). This is a piece from [www.citizenshandbook.org](http://www.citizenshandbook.org) that explains how to do NVC based on the rules and methods from the founder of NVC, Marshall Rosenberg.

### Congregational

- Use Presbyterian Peacemaking Program studies, devotional resources, tips, and the film *Trigger*. Visit [www.pcusa.org/peacemaking](http://www.pcusa.org/peacemaking).

- Learn about Presbyterian Peace Fellowship at [presbypeacefellowship.org](http://presbypeacefellowship.org).

### Advocacy

- Learn about police accountability and reform efforts to demilitarize law enforcement in the Vision for Black Lives policy platform at [policy.m4bl.org](http://policy.m4bl.org). Use the PC(USA) Office of Public Witness action page to ask your D.C. representatives to re-introduce the Stop Militarizing Law Enforcement Act at [bit.ly/demilitarize](http://bit.ly/demilitarize).

### Personal

- Buy conscientiously. Understand the environmental, economic, and social impact of your consumer choice. Visit [www.pcusa.org/enough](http://www.pcusa.org/enough)
- Visit [www.41pounds.org](http://www.41pounds.org) to stop unwanted junk mail today!

### Congregational

- Reduce overall consumption in your building.
- Use reusable napkins, towels and cups at your fellowship meals and events.

- Return waste naturally to the earth through recycling and composting.

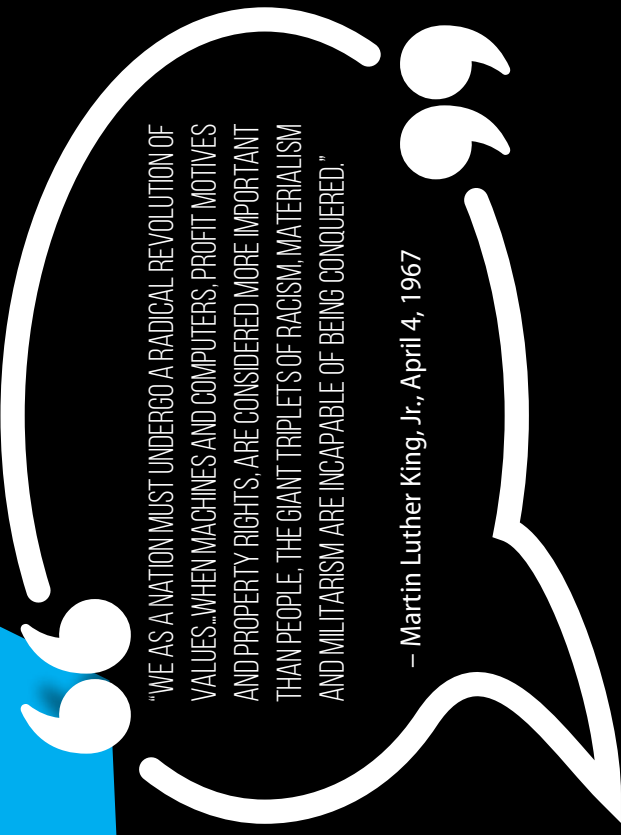
### Advocacy

- Support efforts to limit corporate and materialistic advertising to children. Take action at [www.commercialfreelchildhood.org/actions](http://www.commercialfreelchildhood.org/actions)

### Sources:

- Lent 4.5: Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus
- How to Fight Racism: A Sociological Guide to Being an Anti-Racist. Activist by Nicki Lisa Cole - [citizenshandbook.org](http://citizenshandbook.org)

\* Adopted by PC(USA) General Assembly in 2016, the Belhar Confession was written by non-white Christians in South Africa in 1982 to challenge the theological support that undergirded Apartheid. It is applicable today wherever the church is divided for any reason.



"WE AS A NATION MUST UNDERGO A RADICAL REVOLUTION OF VALUES...WHEN MACHINES AND COMPUTERS, PROFIT MOTIVES AND PROPERTY RIGHTS, ARE CONSIDERED MORE IMPORTANT THAN PEOPLE, THE GIANT TRIPLETS OF RACISM, MATERIALISM AND MILITARISM ARE INCAPABLE OF BEING CONQUERED."

- Martin Luther King, Jr., April 4, 1967

## Militarism and the Occupation of Land in Sri Lanka

Herman Kumara, Convener for the National Fisheries Solidarity Organization (NAFSO)

The 26 years of Civil War in Sri Lanka brought enormous difficulties to the country, and to the numerically minority Tamils. Mostly, the poor and marginalized groups faced serious threats due to killings, disappearances, abductions, harassments, rapes, displacements, and loss of properties and whatever they had for survival. The brutal war ended May 19, 2009, displacing more than one million Tamil people who had been staying in Welfare Camps. Most of the lands that had originally belonged to Tamil people were classified as high security zones or restricted areas under military control or occupation. A lot of people-owned lands were converted to military camps, naval bases or air force camps.

It was justifiable to keep the lands for some time under the military monitoring process for national security purposes, as it has been claimed. However, is it still justifiable today for the government and the military to retain the lands when eight years have passed since the war ended and the government declared its defeat of the separatists? Is it justifiable that people's lands are used for economic purposes, tourism, animal husbandry, and continued economic activities while they are deprived of building their own economies? It is important to learn the dynamics of post war economic development in many of the Tamil areas. Praja Abilasha, a Joining Hands partner, works with communities and supports their efforts to demand their land back. In late February, it brought together Northern and Southern people in demanding their lands back.

Thousands of People still live in Internally Displaced Camps in Jaffna peninsula as well as in the Northern province. The living conditions in the camps are below humanitarian standards. Women and girls do not feel safe, and most of the women



Praja Abilasha

Women from the Mulaitivu district celebrating victory and returning to their land.

head their households with no income for survival. There is unreported gender-based violence. Gender stereotyping persists among women-headed households, as they go out in search of jobs and food but are branded as sex workers or women with bad character. Humanitarian assistance stopped when the government irresponsibly declared no more IDPs in the country in September 2013, thus perpetuating and aggravating hunger and malnutrition there.

In Palaly, where one of the largest military bases is situated, around 13 km of coast from Palay to Urani area are kept under High Security Zone, thus displacing the people who owned lands in the area. The Myleddy fishery harbor and the coastal areas are still under military control, and almost all the houses were destroyed by the military. People claimed those houses were destroyed last year, after the country had a regime change. More than 3,500 fisher families are displaced in the Myleddy area alone.

In Mullikulam in Mannar district, the Navy built their biggest naval base, thereby displacing 350 families in the Marichchakattu forest area. In the same district, there are hundreds of people from Palimunai area who were displaced due to a Naval base established in the village. Praja Abilasha supports landowners with legal assistance to get their land back. Pallimunai people's demand is clear: "We want our land and houses for our survival. We are fishermen and need the coastal land to begin our livelihoods. When will the Navy give us our land back? We need land to revive our fishing activities."

People in the Pulikudirippu, Keppapulawu, area in Mulaitivu district, the majority of whom are women and of around 385 families, began the struggle of demanding their land back from the Air Force on January 31, 2017. The women declared they would not stop until they got their lands back. Finally, on March 1st, 2017,

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# Sanctuary as Resistance and Solidarity

Susan Krehbiel, Catalyst for Refugees and Asylum, PDA

Just five days after taking the oath of office, President Trump issued a number of executive orders related to immigration, primarily focused on harsh enforcement tactics. In addition to the oft-referenced border wall, the federal government demands greater cooperation from local law enforcement to hold someone. It threatens to deny federal grants to sanctuary cities, sanctions against governments who refuse to receive people being deported, and orders an expansion of the detention system (already the largest in the world)- including the imprisonment of bona fide refugees and asylum seekers.

One of the ways that people of faith are protecting and supporting our immigrant neighbors is through sanctuary. The concept of sanctuary as a way for the church to protect someone goes back centuries. At its most basic, it is the use of a church building as a place of safety, from harm being threatened by the government or society at large.

In recent U.S. history, sanctuary churches have hosted Central American refugees who fled the civil wars of the 1980's, immigrant families facing deportation at risk of harm, and youth who have grown up in this country and have nowhere and no one to go "back to" in their home country. The most recent to be welcomed into sanctuary are again Central Americans who have fled in the past few years some of the most violent circumstances and abject poverty. Still others are young adults and families from Mexico who know no other country than the U.S. as their true home.

In many locations sanctuary churches are part of interfaith coalitions that surround the immigrant community and partner with them to address discriminatory laws or policies, to join together for community action. At the core of all of these efforts is the notion to protect the vulnerable and to stand up for just and humane treatment.



Gregg Brekke

PC(USA) staff gather in solidarity with immigrants and refugees.

Whether it is a church, synagogue, school or city, sanctuary is about a community surrounding one of our own. Sanctuary has also spread to many different types of institutions – colleges and seminaries, cities and counties, even individual homes.

The new national sanctuary pledge reads:

*"As people of faith and people of conscience, we pledge to resist the newly elected administration's policy proposals to target and deport millions of undocumented immigrants and discriminate against marginalized communities. We will open up our congregations and communities as sanctuary spaces for those targeted by hate, and work alongside our friends, families, and neighbors to ensure the dignity and human rights of all people."*

Sanctuary is an act of resistance: resistance against government actions and policies that are contrary to our moral traditions, resistance against fear, resistance against divisions that pit us vs. them. It is an act of solidarity: solidarity with refugees and immigrants at risk of harm, solidarity with love, solidarity with our most basic values of human dignity.

And at its heart, Sanctuary is a deep spiritual commitment - living out our faith teachings that recognize these neighbors, regardless of national origin, as children of God. Sanctuary forms a spiritual bond that surrounds our immigrant brothers and sisters in prayer.

Last summer, the PC(USA) General Assembly passed two resolutions that reaffirm the principles upon which the sanctuary movement was formed and "recognizes that offering sanctuary is one way in which Presbyterians are living out the Gospel call to love our neighbor and welcome the stranger." New sanctuary churches and interfaith coalitions are forming every day. Making the decision to become a sanctuary church requires careful discernment. To get started, learn more about how to become a sanctuary congregation or to join a sanctuary coalition at: <http://www.sanctuarynotdeportation.org/>. Additional information on PC(USA) history in the sanctuary movement and Presbyterian voices, go to: <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/immigration/sanctuary>.

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most repressive.

So what did we accomplish? It was a tremendous sign of the power of God's Spirit, the relevance of the church and the collective power of people of faith. It provided hope and encouragement to thousands. It gave voice to many who felt as if their voices of outrage and protest were ignored. It spoke for the voiceless millions who had no health care, thousands who lost unemployment benefits in a time of recession and teachers who felt unappreciated. It also brought about change. House Bill 589, infamously called the "monster suppression bill" was overturned by the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals in an NAACP lawsuit. It was extremely empowering for me as I testified in federal court as a plaintiff. The appeals court stated that the legislation was "passed with racially discriminatory intent," and its decision was upheld by the Supreme Court.

The mission of the church is to proclaim the good news of the gospel of Christ Jesus. The mission of the church is to continue to fulfill the mission of Jesus, who stated that the "Spirit of the Lord is upon me and He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor." (Luke 4). Jesus was a preacher, a teacher and a healer. In order to heal, we must be active where the wounds of life are most evident: amongst those whose lives are filled with more than they can handle; amongst children who need to know that they are special in the eyes of God despite how the world sees them. We know that the church was called into being for "such a time as this" (Esther 4:14). This is our time, a Kairos moment for the Christian Church to stand up in the name of Jesus on behalf of those whose lives are crippled by circumstances beyond their control. We stand up because the Word of God compels that we "do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God" (Micah 6:8).

*Materialism, continued from page 5*

Cerrado region of Brazil have more than doubled since 2012. The Cerrado is one of the world's 25 biodiversity hotspots with nearly half of the vegetation in its once glorious savannas destroyed and another third degraded. Woodlands are cleared at an alarming pace to make room for giant soy estates.

Hiparidi Top'Tiro, a leader of the Mobilization of Indigenous Peoples of the Cerrado told Cultural Survival, "Our lands are completely surrounded by huge agroindustry. They are poisoning our rivers and our children. They fly over our lands when they dust crops, dropping chemicals down onto us from the air."

**TIAA Land Grabs Campaign**

TIAA refutes the charges of destructive land grabs, but a lack of transparency makes it very hard to know the actual impacts of TIAA investments. TIAA refuses to disclose the names and locations of the individual farms. And even if TIAA is only buying existing farmland, these may be lands obtained illegally by local land grabbers and then sold to TIAA. For these reasons, the TIAA Land Grabs Campaign is focusing on increased transparency as well as an end to TIAA's land investments.

PHP and other partners have launched the TIAA Land Grabs Campaign with long-term partners such as the National Family Farm Coalition, WhyHunger, and the US Food Sovereignty Alliance, and new partners ActionAid USA and Friends of the Earth US. Together we are building on a successful 2013 campaign that compelled TIAA to drop U.S. companies that supported Israel's occupation of Palestine.

"We're giving TIAA an opportunity to take the lead worldwide on land grabs and environmental destruction," says Jeff Conant of Friends of the Earth. "Pressure from their pension fund holders is part of convincing them to step up."

*Militarism, continued from page 8*

they were able to return, which was a huge victory in this land struggle.

The only demand of the women was clear and loud, "We need our land back for our life and livelihoods. Our land is our life, hence we need the land to revive our agriculture activities. As women headed households we do not have any other source of income than cultivating our land." Praja Abilasha was in coordination with members on the ground and supported their efforts until the just demands of the women were won in Keppapulawu.

On the east coast, people in Paanama in Ampara district have been in their land struggle since 2007. Even after the Cabinet decision on February 11, 2015, to release 340 acres of land out of 1,200 acres, the military continues their occupation in most of the areas and disturbs the revival of their livelihoods based on fishing and agriculture. In Ashroff Nagar in Ampara district, the military camp is not allowing people to resettle, even after the court ordered it to do so.

All these matters should be of higher importance for the government, since they affect its own citizens. We urge the Government of Sri Lanka to consider the just demands of people who continue to live in IDP camps or elsewhere without land, houses or livelihoods, to resettle the IDPs immediately and provide livelihood assistance to revive their lives. Basic facilities, land, housing, drinking water, and sanitary facilities, which were available to them before the war and were lost during the war, must be provided to them.

For women-headed households, Praja Abilasha demands from the government an adequate standard of living, free from fear, insecurity, hunger and malnutrition. Of prime importance is that the government gives them their originally owned lands that ensure their decent life with dignity.



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