



## **Quadrennial Priorities 2021-2024**

### **Prepared by The Action and Global Concerns Committee**

#### **Theme: Justice and Righteousness**

**God's Word:** *The Lord God has told us what is right and what he demands: "See that justice is done, let mercy be your first concern, and humbly obey your God." Micah 6:8 CEV*

Acting justly is rooted in what is right as it relates to our relationship with God and lived out in our relationship with each other and in our stewardship over creation. God has shown us what is good and what is required to do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly (under God's leadership). In these days and times, the world has seen an increasingly public display and demonstration of the many ways humans have found to harm one another. Played out on a global scale from the highest of government positions to the everyday-ness of what it means to be a neighbor, the injustices of racism, sexism, homophobia, ageism, unbridled capitalism, and inequitable power have entrenched hatred and evil from our foundational institutions to our interpersonal interactions. Church Women United (CWU) has a special role to enact a distinct form of hope into what could otherwise be seen as intractable despair.

CWU, as an organization and as a community of church women, is poised to use its collective, regional, and local influence and numbers to mobilize human, economic, legislative, and educational capital for the focused purpose of cultivating mutual good for all human beings – in other words – to bring about true justice as a foundation for producing and protecting true peace.

The Action and Global Concerns committee has found itself with a unique opportunity to create anew an action plan to tackle some of what we're calling, "momentum points." Momentum points are areas of content and strategy that lead to building the momentum needed to dislodge the power of the status quo and construct new ways of being for mutual human flourishing. Taking seriously that no one organization can tackle all that needs to be "fixed" in the world, we have constructed a template by which we can methodically and intentionally address "momentum points" to garner the greatest shifts toward justice; which can then be contextualized by individual units who will work individually and in partnerships in their areas. The following provides a template to be used as a guide toward such work. May the blessings of God be with us and correct us as we do the work of God in the world and become more and more who we've been divinely created to be. AMEN.

#### **Priority #1: Health and Wellness**

**God's Word:** *On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice. For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.'" Matthew 9:12-13 NIV*

Church Women United (CWU) acknowledges the decades long, historic impact of racism, discrimination and, poverty in widening the health and wellness gap on the most vulnerable citizens: Blacks, Hispanic/LatinX, Native Americans, rural populations, immigrants, and

working poor are likely to die, endure greater suffering and experience higher rates of almost every kind of disease or illness the medical industry tracks. We face again this inconvenient truth as our nation contends with a fast-moving, border-crossing, color-blind and invisible COVID-19 enemy virus.

The pandemic elevates systematic racism, economic barriers, and social structural impediments in dangerously, visible ways. CWU must work in collaboration with our partners, allies, and local units, to increase access, accountability, and resources to these marginalized communities to ensure they have a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible. Therefore, Church Women United must heighten our activism, advocacy, and prayers to ensure the sick gets a doctor and their lives are protected.

### **Focus Area: Health Equity**

#### **Action Steps:**

- Familiarize yourself with the National Partnership for Action to End Health Disparities Toolkit for Community  
Action: [https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/npa/files/Plans/Toolkit/NPA\\_Toolkit.pdf](https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/npa/files/Plans/Toolkit/NPA_Toolkit.pdf).
- Educate yourself on the issues of race, poverty leading to health disparities: Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health: <https://www.nap.edu/read/12875/chapter/1>.
- Support strategies and technologies for eliminating food insecurity in marginalized communities, urban centers and among rural populations.
- Promote equal access to health care, including mental health, affordable care, and preventive medical services to appropriate stakeholders and governing bodies.
- Champion public health policy prescriptions with national, state, and local decisions makers that do not adversely sacrifice the sick and poor, while advancing the interests of the privileged and powerful.

### **Priority #2: Climate Stewardship**

**God's Word:** *But ask the animals, and they will teach you. Or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth and it will teach you, or let the fish in the sea inform you. Which of all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind. Job 12:7-10*

Church Women United believes that our earth is a gift from God entrusted to us to care for. We believe it is our responsibility to pay attention to and offer remedy where the growing climate issues are concerned. In particular we support the idea of Environmental Equity. We affirm the science that informs us. We are committed to raising awareness and educating when we can about environmental issues.

**Focus: Environmental Justice and Action:** Environmental Justice (EJ) is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and polices.

### **Action Steps:**

- Develop and implement a meeting with speakers who are expert in their field or advocates for CWU members to introduce the concepts of Environmental Justice and Equity.
- Develop a resource list of groups working in EJ for CWU members, which will continue to inform them and provide action steps they may take to advocate for EJ in their geographic areas and nationwide.
- Host an open community meeting to raise awareness about EJ. and to connect EJ to stewardship of our world as people of God.
- Assign an EJ lead in your CWU group to pay attention to what is happening locally, regionally, and nationwide.
- Develop a partnership with an EJ group in your area or nationally that you might consider praying for, keeping members apprised about, and being a part of their work.
- If you are doing a Legislative Breakfast have questions for your Legislators about their work in EJ.
- Invite a speaker to your annual meeting to speak about Environmental Justice.

### **Priority #3: Social Justice**

**God's Word:** *"In the temple courts (Jesus) found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, 'Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market.'" His disciples remembered that it is written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.'"* John 2: 14-17

Often times this verse is interpreted as if Jesus abhors money or trade as evil in and of itself. However, study about what kinds of activity were occurring makes it clear that Jesus was upset not about business – but business practices that oppressed the already poor and marginalized. Jesus was overturning tables in the Temple because the practices themselves were part of a system which created a direct link between the religious/power system of the day with a social system which oppressed the most vulnerable. Church Women United realize that for the Church to be (and represent) the House of God – it must not collude with social systems which create and protect injustice. Rather, all social oppressive systems must be “flipped” in order for the real work of Kin-dom building to occur.

**Focus: Racial Justice,** with the heightened more publicized realities of racial injustice all over our TV, computer, and phone screens, it is impossible to talk about social justice without prioritizing racial justice. Church Women United cannot “be about” social justice without doing specific work to create racial justice both inside and outside our organization and the Church.

- **Actions Addressing Individual Racism:** individual racism is the racism that lives within an individual's beliefs, values, and actions. We as Church Women United should read materials written about People of different racial and ethnic groups. Many racial prejudices and stereotypes stem from not learning “about” other people groups through first-hand knowledge or the history behind phrases and actions :

- Units can read, share, and discuss materials written by the very people you are trying to learn about – it decreases the chances you will attribute myths or lies that hide in stereotypes and prejudices.
- Units can hold events and programs featuring a specific people group in their communities, outside their communities or of members of their unit that are part of a specific lineage ethnic group to learn about groups lineage, history, culture and challenges facing them as a member of that group as Americans so as to increase knowledge of that people group. A member within your unit, no matter their lineage ethnic or heritage may want to volunteer and talk about their heritage as part of your meeting or may want to have a heritage cultural event to highlight, celebrate members who want to share about heritage. You could even invite non members to participate and attend.
- Develop a task force to create an action plan for your area/group to rewrite the bylaws of your company/church/social justice group (including our own Church Women United) so that it can become an anti-racist organization. Do a racial equity audit of your job, church, denomination, political leadership, school board, banking institutions, etc. Determine which changes could make the difference in multiple institutions (i.e., changes to a local school board makes changes to school funding makes changes to school success makes changes to college admissions makes changes to job market).
- **Actions Addressing Systemic Racism:** Systemic racism includes the racism that moves from institution to institution and influences each institution as it does.
  - Units can read and share *The New Jim Crow*, *The Color of Law*, *Lynching Lynchism* or watch the documentary 13<sup>th</sup> to learn about how systemic racism exists within the legal system. Hold a discussion group within the unit and consider inviting the community and a guest speaker to address the material and be a part of the discussion.

Alexander, Michelle, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Color Blindness*, The New Press, ©2010.

Rothstein, Richard, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, Liveright, ©2018.

Street, Terri L, *Lynching Lynchism: It's Time to Heal and What We Must Do*, Independently Published, ©2021.

- Read and share articles written especially by academics, activist, advocacy groups and others in which they discuss racism and discuss how higher education and tenure systems have racial discrimination built into the policies and procedures. Some have drafted legislation, written policy papers and suggested ways to promote them; and, take actions that may prompt your unit to partner with them.

## **Priority #4: Hunger and Poverty**

**God's Word:** *He will bring justice to the poor of the people; He will save the children of the needy, And will break in pieces the oppressor.* Psalm 72:4 NKJV

Church Women United recognizes the pandemic worsened work life for many who cobble together several low wage jobs to make ends meet, whereas others thrived. Since WWII, many majority families built wealth primarily from increasing home values, whereas minority families were locked in neighborhoods with declining property values often taken by eminent domain. The result is a disparity in generational wealth along racial lines. This means many families are not able to assist each other during a crisis.

Women of faith strive for a just society that provides a temporary safety net, which includes unemployment compensation or stipends, and training for new careers. Maintaining some income will lessen food insecurity, forestall evictions, and reduce stress. Job loss should not result in losing one's home, community, and savings thereby lapsing into poverty. Stability fosters a learning environment for children preparing them for success.

### **Focus: Wealth Inequality**

#### **Action Steps:**

- Support local and national legislation for workers rights to advance work schedules, a living wage, sick and family leave, and benefits.
- Advocate for access to fresh produce, the elimination of food deserts in urban and rural communities, and, community garden programs.
- Support CWU's United Against Hunger Campaign by donating to and volunteering at local Food Banks or pantries.
- Coordinate or support the collection of unspoiled, healthy food to donate to neighbors in need. Donated food feeds people not landfills and saves money.
- Sponsor cooking demonstrations and share, [Eat Well on \\$4/Day Good & Cheap](#).
- Explore the challenges of living in poverty through Bread for the World's [Racial Wealth Gap Simulation](#).
- Explore the website: [The Red Road: The Issue of Native American Poverty](#)
- Recommended reading:  
Corbett, Steve and Fikkert, Brian, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor... and Yourself*, Moody Publishers, ©2012.  
Vance, JD, *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crises* by JD Vance, HarperCollins, ©2016.