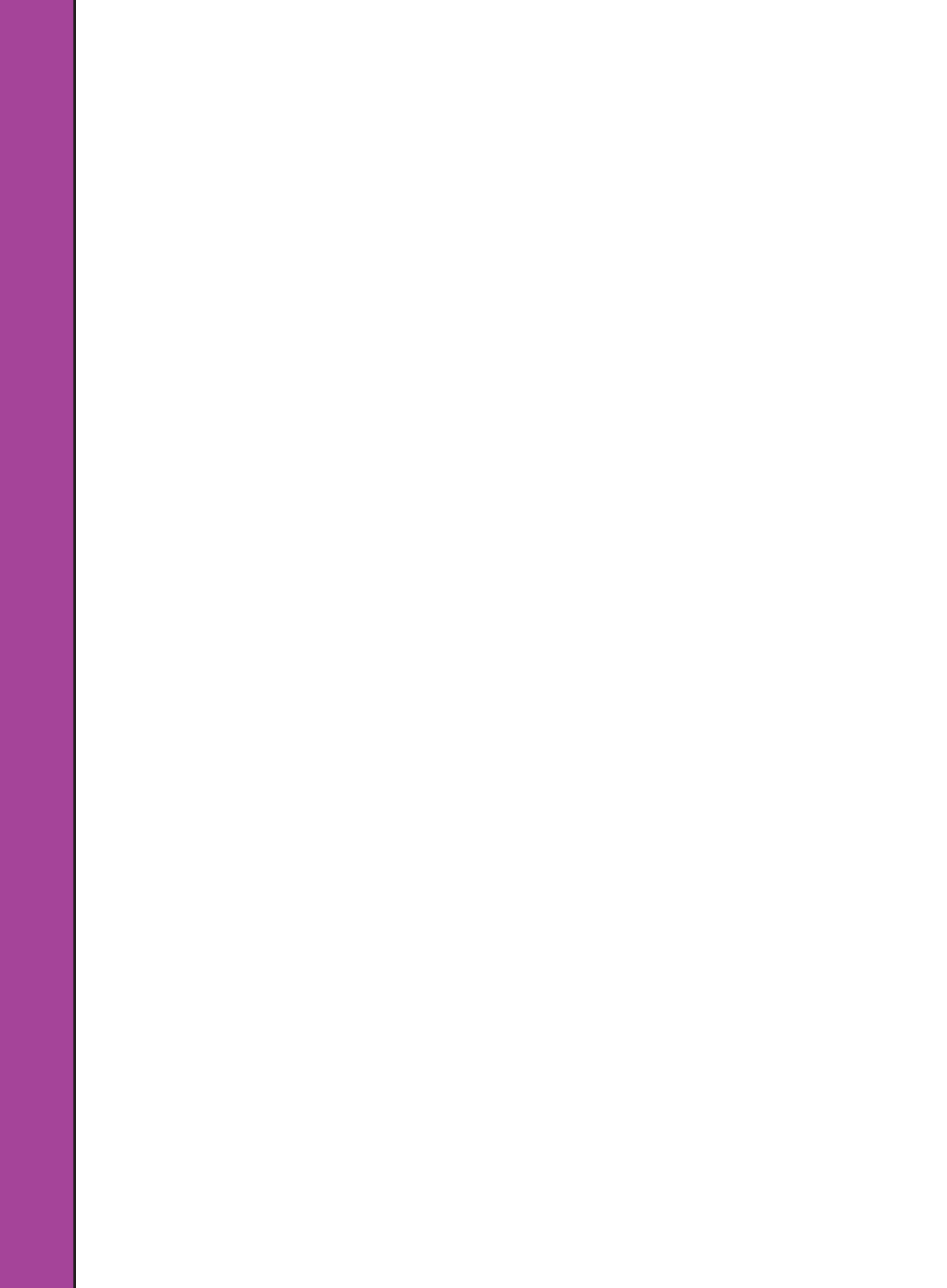


PROTESTANTS FOR THE COMMON GOOD

"People of faith advancing justice in public life"

77 W. Washington St. #1124
Chicago, IL 60602
tel: 312.223.9544
fax: 312.223.9540
thecommongood.org





Protestants for the Common Good educates and mobilizes people of faith to participate in political democracy for the sake of social justice and the beloved community.

We are a voice of progressive Protestant Christianity.

Founded in 1996, PCG brings an informed and progressive Protestant voice to public life. In keeping with its mission, PCG offers educational programs and advocacy opportunities to people of faith on matters of public policy and community life.

We bring a biblical and theological perspective to critical public issues.

Our approach to public life emerges from an understanding of God's inclusive love and the recognition of justice as mutuality and interdependence. We respond to God's love by working for the common good and by creating a community of mutuality in which each person is given maximum opportunity to flourish and contribute to the whole.

Our vision of the common good is articulated in the Common Good Agenda, a series of principles rooted in this theology of God's purpose and justice to guide political thinking and advocacy.

We are a defining presence in Springfield.

Protestants for the Common Good maintains a presence in Springfield during the legislative session to inform elected officials of our positions on public policy, assist clergy and lay leaders of PCG in communicating with their legislators, and alert constituents to the need for advocacy through timely calls to action. Legislators have openly welcomed the PCG voice in the capitol, seeking assistance especially on issues of disagreement with the political Christian right.

We are a significant presence in churches across the state.

The central focus of PCG is to assist people in examining and exercising their responsibility as citizens in the light of their Christian faith. We pursue our educational activities and, where appropriate, our advocacy opportunities, through discussions and programs in congregational settings, from the pulpit when staff or board members are preaching, in public events like community forums, and through the dissemination of written policy and theological statements.

PCG has developed relationships with over 400 churches and their clergy and lay leaders throughout the Chicago metropolitan area, northern Illinois, and in a growing number of downstate communities.

We recognize churches as essential places to explore the faith dimensions of political issues.

We help church members consider the impact of public policy on the common good in order to move beyond charity to justice in their application of faith to the broader community. We develop clear faith perspectives and written materials on political issues in keeping with the Common Good Agenda.

Advocacy opportunities are addressed to individual persons of faith. We never ask congregations to take a position, as an institution, on specific political issues or legislation. We act as a communications bridge between church members and advocacy groups working for issues of social justice.

We publish a bi-weekly electronic newsletter that discusses faith and public life.

The Common Good Network assists 4,000+ subscribers in exploring the relationship between faith and public issues through timely columns, essays, sermons and speeches on the common good, legislative and policy updates, biblical commentary on lectionary readings, fact sheets and a calendar of pertinent church and community events.

We also distribute Faith-in-Action alerts, providing advocacy opportunities for individuals to contact their local, state, and federal policymakers when legislative action is imminent.

We act as a site for field work by students in universities, seminaries, and schools of public policy.

PCG has become a highly sought place for field work that prepares the next generation of clergy and advocates who will work for justice and the common good.

We cooperate with a broad range of coalitions.

We work with interfaith and ecumenical advocacy coalitions whenever possible. We also work with coalitions of secular organizations on justice issues of mutual concern, adding a faith dimension to many common efforts.

We provide resources to clergy and to churches.

We assist clergy and laity in articulating the faith dimensions of public policy by offering programs in local churches on social justice issues and making presentations at denominational meetings and conferences. We conduct advocacy trainings tailored for the particular interests and challenges of congregational members. We offer opportunities for clergy and other people of faith to testify at public hearings, visit their elected officials, and sign petitions for policy makers at the city, county, state, and federal levels of our society.

We also convene the Faith and Politics Forum which brings together religious and civic leaders, advocates, scholars, and shapers of public opinion to share insights, information, and practices on the intersection of faith and public life. The ongoing conversation of the Forum helps PCG strengthen our work by: encouraging persons of faith and conscience to participate in the democratic process; assisting in the formulation of a common good agenda; and recommending strategies for education and advocacy.

The following is a list of our recent activities and accomplishments:

Educational:

2008 Launched the Academy for the Common Good which trains pupils to become advocates and leaders in educating and organizing other people of faith. Four Academy offerings have been held in the metropolitan area, with other sessions scheduled for presentation in local churches in 2010.

2008 Assisted in the creation of the Illinois Climate Action Network (ICAN), a collection of environmental, business, science and faith-based organizations dedicated to reducing global warming pollution in Illinois. PCG created environment materials for use in churches and began actively advocating for legislation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions statewide.

2008 Hosted “Why Faith Matters...And How!” with speaker David Wilhelm, the former chair of the Democratic National Committee and a member of the PCG Board. Held just before the November general election, the program focused on the role of religion in U.S. presidential elections.

2009 Hosted the “New Directions for Drug Policy in Illinois,” bringing together drug policy leaders and legislators from New York, California, Illinois and Canada. Over 130 people were in attendance, including city, county, and state officials, resulting in a significant legislative movement on the county level to decriminalize low levels of marijuana.

Legislative:

2008 Helped pass an ordinance establishing an independent governance board for the Cook County Bureau of Health Care Services in response to the threatened collapse of the public health care system in low-income communities

2008 Led the successful effort to obtain a 9% grant increase, for families enrolled in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program (TANF) in collaboration with the Shriver National Center on Poverty Law. This was the first grant increase since 2002.

2009 Aided in the expansion of the “Certificates of Relief from Disability” and “Certificates of Good Conduct” programs to include ex-offenders by removing restrictions that barred their ability to seek employment. The bill also mandated that the Department of

Finance and Professional Regulation issue pre-training advisory opinions for ex-offenders seeking training and employment in jobs that require professional licenses.

2009 Organized the Faith-in-Action for Education Funding Reform Lobby Day, in collaboration with the Community Renewal Society, bringing 100 individuals to Springfield and collecting over 700 signatures from people of faith in 95 of the state's 118 legislative districts in order to advocate for tax reform that would generate more revenue for public education and reduce funding disparities across the state.

2009 Participated in the Environmental Lobby Day in Springfield with other members of ICAN, bringing several Academy graduates to advocate on behalf of Clean Cars legislation. PCG also aided in the passage of Federal Climate Change Legislation by convincing key Illinois Representatives to vote in favor of the American Clean Energy and Security Act.

2009 Advocated successfully for improvements to the TANF program by increasing eligibility from 33% to 50% of the federal poverty level and providing crisis assistance for victims of domestic and sexual violence.

2009 Worked to pass campaign finance reform legislation that restricts funds flowing into elections, mandates strong enforcement and disclosure, and limits the amounts party leaders can contribute to primary races. As a steering committee member of CHANGE Illinois, PCG was at the forefront of this successful and groundbreaking endeavor.

PCG staff and board are available as a resource to your church. We can preach topically or from the lectionary, and we often speak at adult forums or special gatherings. Our course topics are not an exhaustive list. We are often able to customize programs.

Topics on Faith and Critical Issues:

Faith and Politics: In Polite Company

This introductory program addresses the intersection between the biblical witness, theology, Christian faith and how these issues play out in public life. The program helps church people have a conversation about biblical justice and public policy and consider ways of integrating advocacy into the congregation's life and ministry.

When Mercy Seasons Justice: Ex-offender Issues and the Common Good

In American society, once individuals have committed crimes, they are ex-offenders for life. That status affects opportunities for employment, housing, education and participation in the democratic process. This program helps people of faith understand criminal justice issues and their impact on families and communities.

Investing in the Common Good: Children, Families and Communities

Illinois ranks 48th of 50 states in public school funding equity, and low income taxpayers pay a higher percentage of their income in taxes than upper income taxpayers. Learn more about how state budgeting and tax policies affect the adequate funding of health care, human services and education, and why these are moral issues for people of faith.

The Earth is the Lord's: Faith and Global Warming

Human-induced climate change is rapidly altering our common environment - the earth for which God has given us responsibility. This program will examine the current impact of global warming on our communities, the world's poor and our most vulnerable citizens and focus on actions that can be taken to curb global warming and safeguard the earth for future generations.

It's a Matter of the Heart: Health Care for All

This program takes a careful look at the complex health care issues that impact families, the medical community and businesses across the country. Participants learn about the inter-relatedness of national, state and county policies and discuss a prescription for improving health care services.

Building the Common Good: Advocacy as the Church's Ministry

This training provides the biblical and theological foundation for integrating advocacy into a congregation's life and ministry. Using the newly-published book, ***Weaving a Just Future for Children***, as a central focus, the session describes types of advocacy, discusses models of church-based advocacy and presents practical tools and strategies for planning and action. PCG's position paper, ***Public Faith, Public Church***, is also available as a discussion guide.

Our Nation within the World: Global Issues and the Common Good

The debate over the war in Iraq, and U.S. foreign policies in general, is the focus of this session. The program discusses the concepts of unilateralism and mutuality, the impact of our foreign policy on domestic matters and three principles to shape our foreign policy in the future. The paper, ***Our Nation within the World***, can be sent to the group ahead of time.

To extend a teaching invitation to a member of the PCG staff, please contact Courtney Eccles, Assistant Director of Outreach and Policy, 312-223-9544 x221 or Rev. Alexander Sharp, Executive Director, 312-223-9544 x226.

Academy for the Common Good:

The Academy offers a faith-based, multi-session, educational series which serves as a basic introduction to advocacy and its ability to facilitate the social justice ministries of individuals and churches.

The program consists of 10 two hour sessions that focus on helping participants to:

- **Explore the place of Christian faith in social, economic and political life**
- **Bring biblical-theological perspectives to bear on evaluating public policy**
- **Exercise leadership in congregational education and public ministry**
- **Develop knowledge and abilities to serve as an advocate**

The Academy's program is available to individual congregations so that 15-20 members can receive training to become leaders in the church's mission and public ministries. For further information or to discuss scheduling the Academy for the Common Good in your congregation or organization, contact: Douglas R. Sharp, Dean of the Academy, or Laura Dean Friedrich, Director of Education and Advocacy, (312) 223-9544, ext 223.

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