

Surviving the Struggle

SDOP Sunday Yearbook and Tool Kit

People Investing in People

Feb. 8, 2026 *and beyond!*



Presbyterian Committee on the
**Self-Development
of People**

Welcome

By Rev. Dr. Alonzo Johnson | SDOP Manager



Relationships are powerful! The feelings of interconnectedness characteristic of relationships remind us that being in community is incredibly important, especially in uncertain economic times such as these. Relationships are also dynamic, as poverty is often considered to be intersectional; relationships are intersectional as well. This means that we need each other to engage in the work of community building, networking and doing essential anti-poverty work.

As you engage in this resource, we invite you to recognize the ways that the Lord is inviting us to be in relationship with our communities to battle poverty's many oppressive impediments. These impediments prevent people from living lives of wholeness, access and self-determination. Self-development is about strengthening relationships, cultivating hope, and supporting human thriving and equity.

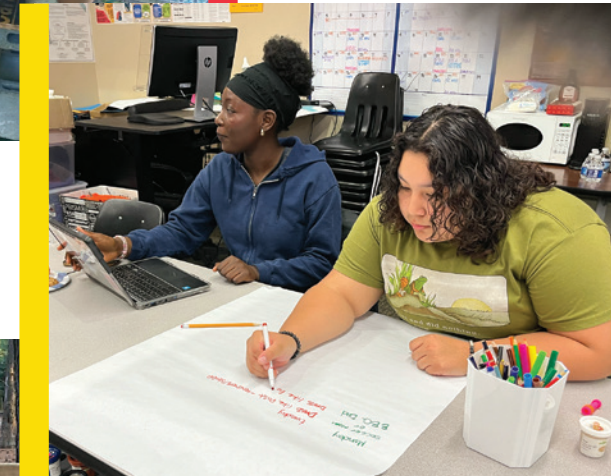
We live out the witness of Jesus Christ by continuing to support communities who, because of your witness, directly benefit from the engaged communal work of the Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People (SDOP). This is what it means to follow the gospel of Jesus in bringing the Good News to all; it is recognizing that human equity, anti-poverty and self-determination go hand in hand. In the words of the late Peruvian theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez — the father of Liberation Theology — “there is no authentic evangelization that is not accompanied by action on behalf of the poor.”

Being the church is a relational act!

Whether your worship experience is physical, virtual or both, this resource is designed for you to share the news of SDOP's relational, dynamic work, witness and stories. Mid council leaders, we encourage you to use this resource to continue to interpret the way that SDOP has been powerful in the church and communities. Share this with your presbyteries and be intentional in inviting others to share in the good news of relationship building through the powerful community-led work of SDOP.

We encourage you to use this resource in your worship services, Bible studies, Sunday school classes, youth group lessons, and any other opportunity where you learn and grow together. We pray that this resource

will inspire you to become more familiar with the work and legacy of SDOP. We also hope that this resource can serve as a guide for you and your ministry to become better familiar with the ways that SDOP engages in its work through the church and in communities. We pray that this resource also inspires you to support this redemptive work through the One Great Hour of Sharing.



Reflections

By Rev. Dr. Jermaine McKinley | Co-Chair, Self-Development of People Ministry Team, Pittsburgh Presbytery Justice Ministries



Working for the Common Good

Thinking about what to share, the preacher in me wants to “take a text” to substantiate the biblical or theological foundation for individuals and groups uniting for a common cause or purpose. So, I read passages like these:

“I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought.”

(1 Corinthians 1:10, NIV)

“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace.”

(1 Peter 4:10, NIV)

Reflecting on the correlations, I am reminded that the power to experience a positive quality of communal life is linked to our interconnectedness and relationships with one another, acceptance of mutual responsibility and engagement in collective actions, capacity to achieve socioeconomic sustainability and ability to fairly address injustices.

We are constructed in the image of the Creator and are expected to live up to our full potential. Yet, we are not all the same. To paraphrase Matthew 25:15, to one the Creator gave five talents, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to their ability. For the common good, we each have gifts and talents capable of benefiting not only ourselves but also those around us — uniting, bonding, collaborating and working for the common good.

I believe, to transform our corporeal and spiritual lives, as well as to realize our full potential, individually and collectively, there is a need to increase and build on knowledge, understanding and experiences. That is something, from inception, SDOP has done with grassroots groups to bring about socioeconomic empowerment and relief from systemic injustice. At least that was the basic theory held after agreeing to be

part of Pittsburgh Presbytery’s SDOP Ministry Team and completing recertification in December 2019. (Recertification is necessary for all SDOP committees to continue awarding SDOP community grants. Projects need to be initiated by, owned, controlled and directly benefit economically poor, oppressed, and disadvantaged community-based groups).

As unemployment rose during a devastating pandemic, inquiries and requests for SDOP applications from enterprising entrepreneurs and community activists with a passion for the least were overwhelming. To faithfully fulfill the mission of SDOP, we brainstormed new ways of being. We began to implement changes after receiving a request to fund an incubator program to train and certify minority women for opportunities in the travel industry and to help an intergenerational group seeking to increase technological proficiency as virtual entrepreneurs. Our SDOP Ministry Team encouraged the creation of SDOP Cohort Groups and Self-Empowerment Networks, and business professional trainings were suggested based on common needs.

Similar training was made available to other groups, including one transitioning from a retail brick-and-mortar floral service to a virtual operation, another expanding a cleaning business, and a self-empowerment network of independent contractors.

Correspondence suggests three or more local groups, meeting national guidelines and the requirement to be a group of 10 or more, submitted applications. Humbly and gratefully, we acknowledge multiple groups received awards of more than \$10,000 each.

SDOP is a call to action. It is a call to be all God intends for you to be. It is a call to live out your purpose for the common good. But the benefit of self-development is not limited to one individual. The talents we possess, the knowledge and experiences gained, are for the benefit of the common good. God blesses us to be a blessing.

Great Provider, we give thanks for Your ability to equip and empower us to work in unity, in one accord. Grant us the strength and courage to be all You intend for us to be. Individually and collectively, may we always strive to work for the common good, in the Name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

WHAT IS SDOP SUNDAY?

SDOP Sunday is an opportunity for Presbyterians to learn about the work of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in engaging with communities on issues of poverty and other social injustices through the ministry of the Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People. SDOP is a beneficiary of the One Great Hour of Sharing, which supports the ministry's work. The SDOP Sunday Yearbook and Tool Kit is an annual booklet highlighting how SDOP engages with communities and the church to eradicate systemic poverty and its intersectional social and economic justice issues. This work is carried out locally, nationally, and internationally through SDOP's national and mid council committees partnering with low-income community-based groups on long-term projects that community residents will initiate and lead. The resource, which is used year-round, is one of the primary ways to connect Presbyterians to the One Great Hour of Sharing.



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. We participate in the empowerment of economically poor, oppressed, and disadvantaged people seeking to change the structures that perpetuate poverty, oppression and injustice.

Suggested uses for this yearbook and tool kit:

- Read this publication to get inspired by the transformative work of our partners.
- Highlight the publication in your newsletters and church announcements to help spread the good news about this work.
- Print out individual stories from your region or area of interest to share with others.
- Call the resource to the attention of the Social Justice Committee, Mission Committee, pastor or anyone with a heart for poverty eradication or justice issues.
- Invite an SDOP representative to speak about SDOP and its partners. The national office can tell you whether there's a national committee member in your area.
- Invite SDOP partners and project participants to offer a Minute for Mission at Sunday worship service.

More ways to help:

- Consider making a donation to support SDOP and its partners.
- Take pictures when attending an SDOP event or listening to a presentation by an SDOP representative. We'd love to share the pictures on social media and perhaps in next year's resource, so please send them our way.

Helping immigrants to overcome trauma

by Darla Carter

Immigrants, refugees and other marginalized people in southwest California are receiving help to rebound from trauma thanks to a project supported by SDOP.

Based in Gardena, California, Mustard Seed Impact International is a faith-based nonprofit that serves “a diverse population of immigrant families, with a particular focus on African diaspora women,” said Rene Anita Chombeng, founder and executive director.

The organization, founded in 2023, endeavors to provide trauma-informed, culturally sensitive support services, knowing that many of its clients have been affected by war, violence and displacement.



“Our trauma-informed care model has directly helped immigrant and refugee women navigate grief, displacement and cultural adjustment,” Chomberg said. “We aim to facilitate healing, restore dignity, and empower individuals to rebuild their lives through counseling, leadership training and community-based initiatives.”

One challenge has been the stigma around mental health within immigrant communities, which makes some women reluctant to seek help. Mustard Seed addresses that by infusing their programs with storytelling, spiritual reflection and culturally relevant practices.

Partnering with SDOP has helped Mustard Seed to build credibility, expand outreach and launch healing-centered programs despite limited resources.

Also, SDOP’s “follow-up and encouragement have made us feel part of a larger network of justice-seeking organizations,” Chomberg said.

GET INVOLVED>>> [Click here](#) to engage with SDOP and its partners.

IMMIGRATION & REFUGEE SERVICES

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) advocates for the rights of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers and supports congregations, mid councils and ecumenical partners who sometimes provide direct services. We work to welcome the stranger, advocate for just laws and provide grants for worthwhile programs and initiatives. The work is guided by faith principles and a commitment to the inherent dignity of all people.

POVERTY

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is actively engaged in addressing poverty, both in the U.S. and globally. We view poverty as a systemic issue requiring holistic and sustained efforts to eradicate it, emphasizing the need to address its root causes and build communities of well-being. The PC(USA) integrates this commitment into various aspects of its work, including worship, education, relationships, action and resource sharing.



Changing the perception of the homeless

by Dave McMahan

In Massachusetts, there are many faces of homelessness. They include young people, the unemployed, victims of domestic violence, people with mental health and substance abuse issues, and an increasing number of families with a lack of resources to maintain and manage housing.

One of the groups that worked to advocate for the homeless has undergone a transition.

The work of the Worcester Homeless Action Committee (WHAC) is now taking place under the auspices of both Dismas House and a newer group, the Commonwealth Green Low-Income Housing Coalition (CGLIHC).

Dismas has spent many years working on creating new housing vouchers for homeless inmates, developing restorative justice opportunities in the courts and working on education and advocacy campaigns for better opportunities for homeless and former offenders.

CGLIHC primarily works for clean energy opportunities for low-income housing to lower utility costs and clean energy.

Former WHAC organizer Mike Earielo is a Dismas graduate who continues organizing and developing opportunities for justice reforms and clean energy through CGLIHC.

Along the way, Dismas has made new friends in the community. First Presbyterian Church of Worcester has provided support for Dismas House, such as cooking for the residents of Dismas Family Farm, a 35-acre residential farm for homeless offenders, and helping out at the farm.

These friendships form the basis for a more just society.

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EDUCATION

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has a strong historical and ongoing commitment to education, both within the church and in the broader community. This commitment is rooted in Reformed theology, which emphasizes the importance of learning and discipleship, and it manifests in various ways, including support for Presbyterian-related educational institutions, promotion of public education, and formation of educational ministries within congregations.



Burnsville High School — Minnesota

Embracing culture and creating a more supportive learning environment

by Darla Carter

SDOP has positively affected students at Burnsville High School in Minnesota by fostering a more engaging and supportive learning environment, including dedicated time for cultural activities.

The high school is part of the Burnsville-Eagan-Savage School District 191, which is described on its website as a “future-forward school district creating barrier-free pathways for learning for everyone in our community.”

Partnering with SDOP has contributed to multiple successes for Burnsville High and beyond.

For example, “students gained access to advanced technology in our Mraz Center as part of our Culture Week celebration,” Associate Principal Eddie Blaylark said. “Students took the opportunity to attend cultural events and mentored our middle school students several times throughout the school year.”

Also, “students planned and provided a proposed budget to purchase and design decor for Culture Week activities,” Blaylark said. “Our students continued to meet outside school hours and were provided (with) a snack during their extracurricular programs. They also had the opportunity to hear from guest speakers,” who emphasized mental health. “These opportunities, along with many others, were beyond the school’s budget.”

SDOP also invested in affinity groups, which allow students who might otherwise feel marginalized to gain confidence, and helped to boost pride and unity. “Overall, the SDOP catalyzed positive change, empowering students while strengthening community ties and resilience,” Blaylark said.

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PLIGHT OF WOMEN & GIRLS

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) actively engages in women's advocacy through various committees and ministries, to address sexism and promote gender justice within the church and society, evaluating policies and programs that impact women. The PC(USA) also has a broader commitment to women's equality in leadership, worship, and ministry, with women serving at all levels of the church.

Why Not Prosper seeks to empower formerly incarcerated women

by Layton Williams Berkes

For over two decades, Why Not Prosper has been showing up in support of formerly incarcerated women in Philadelphia. Why Not Prosper is uniquely and intimately aware of the challenges facing these women. How? Because Why Not Prosper was founded and continues to be run by women who have, themselves, been incarcerated.

After being released from prison, the Rev. Dr. Michelle Simmons found that she was far from the only woman struggling to re-enter society. She started Why Not Prosper in 2001 to support and empower other women like her. The organization has offered various programming, such as pre-release services at prisons, residential services at community houses, family reunification, substance abuse counseling and Medication Assisted Treatment.

Simmons, chief executive officer, said SDOP's assistance has been invaluable. For example, it made it possible to hire a coordinator to help carry out day-to-day activities.

"Since SDOP is a national organization, it has also helped us to gain credibility through national recognition," Simmons said.

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MASS INCARCERATION

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has actively addressed mass incarceration through resolutions, advocacy and educational resources. The denomination has specifically targeted for-profit prisons and advocated for criminal justice reform, recognizing the disproportionate impact on communities of color and the poor.

Made New Foundation — California

Giving justice impacted individuals a second chance

by Darla Carter

While spending time behind bars, Sithy Bin, Major Bunton and Rafael Quiroz witnessed the lack of support that justice-impacted individuals often receive when trying to reenter society and lead productive lives.

The trio has channeled their experience into an Inglewood, California, organization that strives to reduce incarceration and recidivism by empowering individuals with the tools, relationships and experiences needed to thrive.

Their Made New Foundation uses cutting-edge virtual reality (VR) and artificial intelligence (AI) technologies to “deliver immersive, trauma-informed experiences that build resilience, life skills and pathways to success,” said Shannon Royster, director of administration.



“We believe in second chances, and we’re committed to making innovation accessible to those who’ve historically been left behind,” Royster said.

Their efforts include a VR/AI reentry program designed to increase participants’ confidence in navigating real-world situations, according to the MNF website.

Made New also partners with local organizations and schools to deliver VR-based life-skills training and engage “young people through storytelling and interactive simulations that help them visualize new possibilities for their lives and futures,” Royster said. “Students have reported increased motivation, improved emotional regulation and a deeper sense of purpose.”

The organization is thankful for funding from the Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People. SDOP’s “belief in our mission has fueled our growth and affirmed the importance of community-driven solutions to incarceration and reentry,” Royster said.

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RACISM

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has a long-standing commitment to fighting racism, recognizing it as a sin and a violation of God's will. It has developed policies, resources, and initiatives to address both individual and systemic racism within the church and society. This includes acknowledging the church's own history and complicity in racism and working toward racial reconciliation and justice.



Cooperative Association helps Black farmers to fight historical inequities

by Darla Carter

More than a dozen Black farmers with limited resources came together to form the Gullah Farmers Cooperative Association in 2010 to secure markets for their products and to get paid fair prices.

Most of the farmers in the cooperative, which is supported by SDOP and other entities, are from area communities, such as Jasper, Hampton, Allendale, St. Helena Island and Johns Island.

The cooperative helps farmers in several ways, including marketing and technical agricultural training and assistance with seed selection, budgeting, farm certification and U.S. Department of Agriculture programs as well as access to farm-related conferences.

A few years ago, the cooperative identified a 10,000-square-foot building on St. Helena Island and received federal funding to transform it into a fruit-and-vegetable processing facility that has become a beacon of hope for the area.

"It's something that local people are proud of," said Walter Mack, administrative director.

One of the advantages of the cooperative is that participating farmers now have money to pay for property taxes and other expenses. "That's a great economic impact," Mack said.

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Fruit bar production shines as ‘collective effort born from and for the community’

by Darla Carter

Doña Cheva Frozen Fruit Bars Community Group of Panama has been going strong since 2024, earning money for six families and making it possible to overcome community hurdles, with the help of the Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People.

“Doña Cheva not only offers a quality artisanal product but also represents a collective effort born from and for the community,” said Irving Torres, coordinator. “We are driven by the desire to generate a positive social impact, address real needs and create opportunities where none existed before.”

The venture was started to purchase water storage tanks to help the communities of Burunga (Arraiján) and Tocumen and “to expand our product sales to other communities and eventually to the city center, thus generating employment opportunities,” Torres said.

Now, the group “is reaching different corners of the country, and our goal is to continue growing, positioning ourselves in mini-supermarkets, stores, and even in local establishments or restaurants,” Torres said. “However, we keep in mind that it’s not our will that defines our path but God’s will. He is in absolute control of everything we do, and every time we go out to sell or prepare our delicious duros, we entrust ourselves to Him, trusting that His plans will always be perfect.”

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ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) actively works toward economic empowerment, particularly for marginalized communities, by addressing systemic poverty, promoting equitable access and advocating for policy changes. The church’s efforts include direct financial assistance through grants, supporting self-help initiatives and engaging in advocacy for economic justice.



INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), through SDOP, engages internationally by funding grassroots projects in economically poor, oppressed and disadvantaged communities and supporting local groups that initiate, control and manage empowerment initiatives.

Women's Group of Boca la Caja — Panama

Overcoming poverty in Boca la Caja

by Mark Davis

Boca la Caja is unimaginably difficult for North Americans to imagine. More than 6,000 people, mostly older adults and individuals under 18, live in "informal housing" — code words for unsafe dwellings with little more than a leaky tin roof, dirt floors and limited sanitation facilities.

On the edge of the fence, near the various coops for chickens, turkeys, ducks and guinea, is a high fence topped with razor wire, providing a barrier between Boca la Caja and the 40- and 50-story luxury apartments nearby.

Representatives of the Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People visited the Women's Group of Boca la Caja, an SDOP grant recipient. With assistance from SDOP, these women have built a large, simple kitchen to prepare healthy meals.



They also have a makeshift restaurant — two tables and 16 chairs — where the Women's Group feeds customers. Thirteen families benefit directly from the preparation and sale of tortillas, empanadas, buns and hand-picked fish.

The outdoor restaurant also provides space for workshops for adolescents and their mothers. The women extend their gratitude to SDOP for helping to strengthen the community.

GET INVOLVED>>> [Click here](#) to engage with SDOP and its partners.

SDOP by the Numbers 2025

MID COUNCIL (PRESBYTERY & SYNOD)



Total Number of Mid Council Grants



Total Number of People Impacted



Total Dollar Amount of Mid Council Grants



Total Number of Mid Council Adm. Funds



Total Dollar Amount of Mid Council Adm. Funds

NATIONAL (DOMESTIC)



Total Number of National Projects



Total Number of People Impacted



Total Dollar Amount of National Grants



Total MC & National Grants & Projects/Adm. Funds

Total Number of People Impacted for MC & National Projects



Total Dollar Amount of MC & National Grants

INTERNATIONAL



Total Number of International Projects



Total Dollar Amount of International Grants



Released to provide grants in Guatemala and Nicaragua



Funded Groups in Guatemala



Funded Groups in Nicaragua



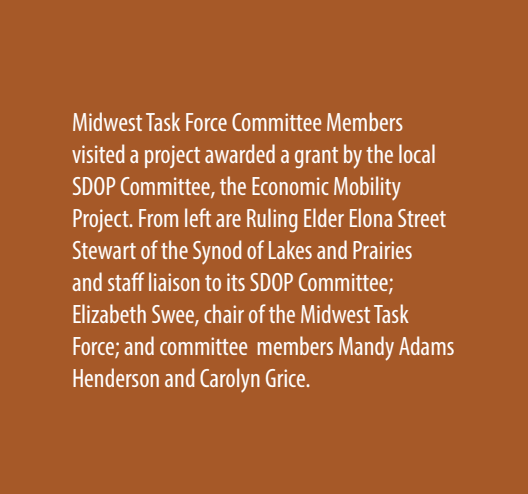
Presbyterian Committee on the
Self-Development
of People



SDOP on the Move in the Midwest



National SDOP in partnership with Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area and Synod of Lakes and Prairies SDOP Committee previously hosted a community grant workshop at Presbyterian Church of the Apostles in Burnsville, Minn. Left, Presbytery of the Twin Cities Executive Presbyter the Rev. Anna Kendig Flores opens the gathering. Also present were SDOP Presbytery of the Twin Cities Committee Chair David Stewart and Synod of Lakes and Prairies Synod Executive Elona Street Stewart.



Midwest Task Force Committee Members visited a project awarded a grant by the local SDOP Committee, the Economic Mobility Project. From left are Ruling Elder Elona Street Stewart of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies and staff liaison to its SDOP Committee; Elizabeth Swee, chair of the Midwest Task Force; and committee members Mandy Adams Henderson and Carolyn Grice.



The Rev. Faye Fedlam, chair of the Mid Kentucky Presbytery's SDOP Committee, at right, and the newest committee member, the Rev. Mark Eldred, center right, met with the Rev. Angela Johnson, Grace Hope Presbyterian Church's pastor, and Del Braaksma, the Mission Committee chair for the presbytery.

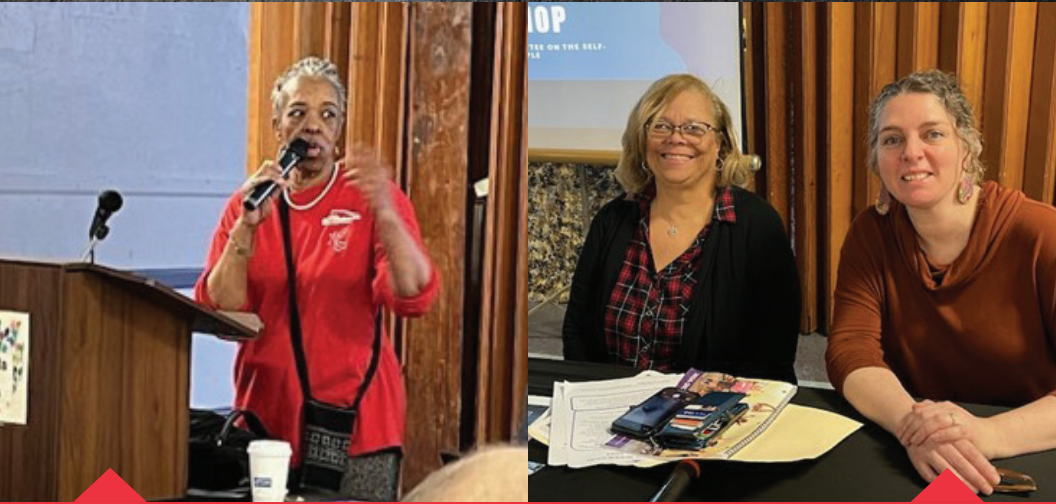


The national SDOP's Midwest Task Force in partnership with St. John Presbyterian Church in New Albany, Ind., recently hosted a gathering for clergy and mission committees on social and economic justice issues. Pictured at the event are Midwest Task Force member Mandy Adams Henderson and St. John Presbyterian Church pastor the Rev. Allen Cowell.



Farhan Abdi, executive director of SDOP-funded partner Somali Community of Louisville, shared information about the organization's work.

SDOP on the Move in the Northeast



The national SDOP Northeast Task Force in partnership with the Pittsburgh Presbytery SDOP Committee met at a community grant workshop hosted at Bethesda Presbyterian Church. At left, Pittsburgh Presbytery SDOP Committee Chair the Rev. Dr. Jermaine Mckinley addresses participants. At right, national SDOP chair and Northeast Task Force members Julia Hill and Rachel Swan respond to questions.

SDOP on the Move in the South



The national SDOP's South Task Force in partnership with Presbytery of the James SDOP Committee hosted social justice events at Chester Presbyterian Church in Chester, Va., and later toured the church's community garden. South Task Force Chair the Rev. Gail Porter Nelson believes that "Self-Development of People is a life-giving ministry that enables the recipients to provide for themselves and their families, which gives them a sense of pride in owning something that benefits their communities as well."



National SDOP Committee and Northeast Task Force Chair Julia Hill was at a dinner for SDOP community partner "Why Not Prosper." The group was initially awarded a grant by Philadelphia Presbytery's SDOP Committee, then by national SDOP. The group's project "Sisters with a goal" (SWAG) focused on health advocacy as they seek to advocate for quality health care for current and formerly incarcerated women. Julia shared that "It was very, very exciting. We did a reentry simulation of what the women go through once they're released from jail that was very enlightening, and a couple of ladies gave a testimony. The head of the organization, Bishop Michelle, talked about four minutes about how the Presbyterian Church had gotten her started in Norristown and how she's so appreciated what the Presbyterian Church has done for her ministry."



James Presbytery SDOP Committee Chair Lamar Lockhart (right) and Chester Presbyterian Church pastor the Rev. Dr. Gordon Mapes III led the church community garden tour.

SDOP on the Move in the West

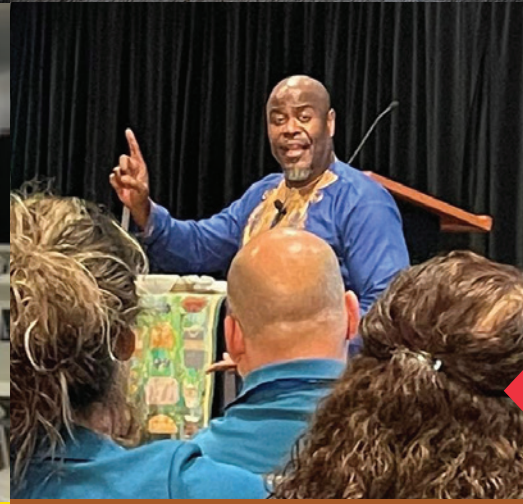


National SDOP West Task Force Chair Dave Brown and Task Force members David Johnson and Janice Kamikawa visited the "Mothers Organized for Peace and Healing" project in Los Angeles.



National SDOP West Task Force committee members David Johnson and Janice Kamikawa participated in the Changing Perspectives on Japanese American Conference in Oakland, Calif.

National SDOP on the Move



SDOP Manager the Rev. Dr. Alonzo Johnson led worship at Stewardship Kaleidoscope in New Orleans.

National committee members, staff and community partners gathered at the University of Louisville. SDOP partnered with University of Louisville's Community Engagement Office on an Immigrant Community "Indaba" (Dialogue). "Indaba" is a word native to the Zulu people of South Africa; its meaning encompasses coming together to discuss or consult over a matter.

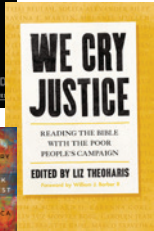


National SDOP's International Task Force visited Women Meeting Space. The group warmly welcomed the task force chair Mark Davis (center) & other task force members with their banner that reads "Women Meeting Space, Feminist on the move."

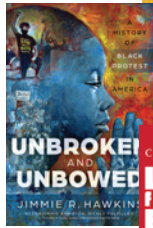
Books About Poverty & Related Issues



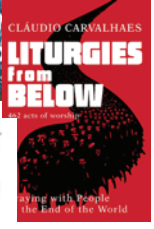
Poverty, by America
by Matthew Desmond



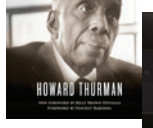
We Cry Justice: Reading the Bible with the Poor People's Campaign
by Liz Theoharis



Unbroken and Unbowed: A History of Black Protest in America
by Jimmie R. Hawkins



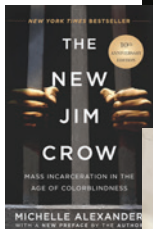
Liturgies From Below
by Claudio Carvalhaes



Jesus and the Disinherited
by Howard Thurman



The Problem of Wealth
by Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty



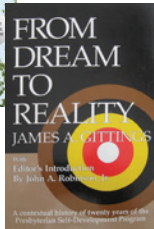
The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness
by Michelle Alexander



Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City
by Matthew Desmond



Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption
by Bryan Stevenson



From Dream to Reality: A Contextual History of the First Twenty Years of the Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People
by James Gittings

Call to Action!

Get involved with Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People!

- 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 specialofferings.pcusa.org 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 local, national and international projects.
- 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. For more information, email valerie.izumi@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.

Free Self-Development of People Resources

On the Self-Development of People [homepage](#), 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).
- PC(USA) Policies on Poverty: pcusa.org/about-pcusa/who-we-are/social-witness.

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 electronic or print resources: 800-728-7228, ext. 5781/5782/5790/5792.

Links to SDOP Video Resources

"The Struggle is Real" on Vimeo:
vimeo.com/showcase/9083159

Questions?

English: 800-728-7228, ext. 5781/5782/5792/5790

Spanish: 800-728-7228, ext. 5781/5790

Email: sdop@pcusa.org

Fax: 502-569-8001

"The Struggle is Real" A Webinar Series on the Intersection of Poverty and Social Justice Issues

Join SDOP'S 2026 Learning Opportunities/Webinars:
Struggle is Real Series Webinar
Topic, time and date to be announced.



The webinar will feature:

- Poverty engagement and intentional action by churches stepping outside their walls to form relationships and live out loving their neighbors.
- Best practices about relationship building and developing partnerships with communities.
- Presence and activism, explore and learn ways to take concrete actions to eradicate poverty.

Further details will be available online (pcusa.org/sdop) in the spring. You may also email sdopevents@pcusa.org if you are interested in participating in the above webinar.

facebook.com/SelfDevelopmentOfPeoplesdop

Sermons & Liturgies

SDOP is excited to partner with the Kairos Center for Religions, Rights and Social Justice, "a national organization committed to building a movement to end poverty, led by the poor" to make numerous sermons and Bible studies available for your use! Visit their website at kairoscenter.org/sermons-bible-studies-liturgies.

A list of ways we can engage in poverty eradication

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs has determined that “poverty entails more than the lack of income and productive resources to ensure sustainable livelihoods. Its manifestations include hunger and malnutrition, limited access to education and other basic services, social discrimination and exclusion as well as the lack of participation in decision-making. Various social groups bear a disproportionate burden of poverty.” We can engage in poverty eradication if we:

Educate the American public on the immensity of poverty in America and worldwide, and how little we are doing to combat it. Challenge the mentality that people are poor because they are lazy or don’t work hard enough to overcome poverty.

1. Deracialize poverty: Re-educate the American public on the conscious and unconscious, false connection between poverty and race. How the face of poverty is often portrayed as being black or brown, while millions more whites are impoverished.
2. Partner with agencies that are effective in strategy and delivery. Study what works and apply strategies and programs to apply in local communities.
3. Identify ways to fight poverty on a multitude of levels: federal, state and local. Do a study of the most effective programs that work and duplicate their paradigms and eliminate those that are ineffective.
4. Address poverty as a regional issue. Identify the most prevalent causes of poverty in your state and local community. Define whether you live in a high, low or medium-poverty region.
5. Base the federal minimum wage on the cost of living. States should adjust their state minimum wage based on the cost to live in that state.
6. Determine state-by-state what the basic income necessary is to be able to afford to live in that state rather than utilizing a national average. The Economic Policy Institute’s Family Budget Calculator is a helpful tool in determining this, it can be found here: epi.org/resources/budget.

7. Men and women suffering from poverty in each region must have full political, economic and social participation in the “design and implementation of policies that affect the poorest and most vulnerable groups of society” (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs).
8. Advocate that the federal government raise the national standard determining poverty, established in 1963, that defines poverty being an annual income of \$24,858 for a family of four; \$12,488 for an individual. This is exceedingly low and completely unrealistic.
9. Strengthen government safety net programs (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program [SNAP], Earned Income Tax Credit, Social Security, Medicaid/Medicare), not weaken them.
10. Address the intersectional root causes of poverty systematically:
 - Food insecurity. Increase SNAP benefits.
 - Wage inequality.
 - Lack of opportunities for upward mobility in employment.
 - Inadequate public transportation.
11. Address and remove the barriers placed upon those formerly incarcerated that keeps them impoverished. The stigma of a felony conviction prevents employment and prevents any type of government assistance. Develop effective reentry programs that provide support and mentoring for men and women who have suffered incarceration.
12. Work to eliminate homelessness by providing homes, not programs.

References:

Economic Policy Institute, “Government Programs Kept Tens of Millions Out of Poverty in 2017” (Sept. 12, 2018)

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, “Programs Targeted for Cuts Keep Millions from Poverty, New Census Data Show” (Sept. 10, 2019)

USA Today, “Progress in Fighting Poverty in America has Slowed Despite Recent Economic Recovery” (Oct. 4, 2018)

USA Today, “Hawaii, Alaska Among the States that Require a Higher Family Income to Avoid Poverty” (Dec. 3, 2019)

JUSTICE IS A JOURNEY ONWARD

Jane Parker Huber, 1994

AUSTRIAN HYMN 8.7.8.7 D

Franz Joseph Haydn, 1797

1. Jus - tice is a jour - ney on - ward, up - ward e - ven
 2. When we hear a cry for jus - tice from the depths of
 3. Em - pa - thy with - out firm ac - tion turns to emp - ty
 4. Jus - tice is a jour - ney on - ward, up - ward, out - ward,

through the pain. Jour - neys have their hills and val - leys;
 hu - man need. Our re - sponse puts love in ac - tion,
 sen - ti - ment, But the call to free God's peo - ple
 spread - ing still. Christ has set us on this jour - ney,

still the dreams and goals re - main. We are peo - ple
 fol - low - ing our Sav - ior's lead. Where we see op -
 leads to self - de - vel - op - ment. When the struc - tures
 claim - ing us for God's own will. Let us share our

freed from bond - age by our Mak - er's will and power.
 pres - sive sys - tems, by peo - ple hun - gry, crushed by fear,
 need re - shap - ing, or our neigh - bor is down - cast,
 neigh - bor's bur - dens far a - way or face to face.

We must now re - spond with ac - tion, in this place and for this hour.
 We must be the voice of jus - tice, and the hand to help and cheer.
 Let us seek a bright - er fu - ture, fair - er than the days gone past.
 So may we, by tak - ing ac - tion, be a part - ner through God's grace.

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CELEBRATE HOPE!

John A. Dalles

DUKE STREET

Cel - e - brate hope! Come, — ga - ther near!
 With Christ our friend, whom — we a - dore,
 The work at hand, is — hea - ven — sent;
 By the re - turn of — dig - ni - ty,

The spi - rit of the Lord is near! For Christ has
 We shall be - friend and bless the poor! Bind up the
 Our mis - sion is em - pow - erment! In one great
 May we build up com - mu - ni ty, With a con -

come — good — news to — preach! Good news for
 wou - nds of — bro - ken - ness! Bring li - ber
 ho - ur, — may — we — share, An off - er -
 cern — for — hu - man - kind, Till we are

all! Good news for each!
 ty to the o - pressed!
 ing of las - ting care!
 one, as God de - signed.

Giving opportunity

Consider giving directly to SDOP at
pcusa.org/donate/e051602-self-development-people-sdop

SDOP is supported by generous gifts to the One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS). Contribute to the OGHS Self-Development of People

- online at pcusa.org/give-oghs
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- send a check, with OGHS on the memo line to:
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