



People Investing in People



Sunday, April 7, 2019

CELEBRATE SDOP SUNDAY

Promote Justice | Build Stronger Communities | Seek Economic Equity

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

In Matthew 25, Jesus asks his disciples the profound question “where have you seen me?” In doing so, Jesus makes a statement about the importance of being able to see that God has a preferential option and redeeming love for the poor. As disciples of Jesus Christ, Matthew 25 also shows us that we are implored to recognize that Jesus’ ministry was one of anti-poverty in which he promoted justice, encouraged the building of relationships and established economic equity. These are also the pillars on which Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People (SDOP) stand.



In this SDOP Sunday resource, our intent is to provide for you a greater sense of our work with diverse community partners who, with energy, diligence and love, address a multiplicity of issues connected with poverty. We pray that this resource will serve as a guide for you

and your congregation to become more familiar with the ways that SDOP engages in its work through the Church and in communities. We pray that this resource inspires you to support this redemptive work through the One Great Hour of Sharing offering collected on Easter Sunday.

Through this resource, we invite you to recognize what the Lord is doing through the great transformative work of Jesus Christ through the witness of SDOP. It also serves to invite and share SDOP’s works and words into your worship space. We encourage you to use this resource in your Bible studies, Sunday School classes, youth group lessons and any other opportunity where you learn and grow together. The following vignettes lift up the powerful witness that exemplifies the love and justice of Christ, which is alive, active and transformative in our communities.

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

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

What does SDOP do?

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 RESOURCE

- If your presbytery/synod has a SDOP Committee (call the national office to find out if a committee exists in your mid council), invite one of its members to speak during your worship service. Call the national office to learn if there are national committee members in your area who could be invited to speak to your congregation.
- SDOP committee members or others can promote the resource (i.e., Social Justice Committee, Mission Committee, etc.); you do not have to be a pastor to do so. But it is always encouraged to bring the resource to your pastor's attention.
- SDOP committees can share their own experiences as they promote the resource.

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

- Take pictures if you are meeting with local groups, or if you are present at SDOP events. We encourage you to also take pictures if possible when a local group or a representative of SDOP speaks in a congregation, presbytery or other venues. Send us copies of those pictures so that we too can lift up what you are doing for SDOP Sunday.

HERE IS HOW YOUR CONGREGATION CAN HELP

- Invite participants of a nearby Self-Development of People (SDOP) project to offer a "Minute for Mission" during your Sunday worship service. Contact the national SDOP office to learn about community partners in your area.
- Include this resource in newsletters and articles.
- Call pastors and other church leaders to remind them of SDOP Sunday and the materials available.





Women's group at work in the restaurant

Self-Development of People's Long-Term Work in Belize

Marigold Women's Group, Toledo District

This group of indigenous Mayan women has started a roadside restaurant that offers employment for the members and improves the community.

Sandy Beach Women's Cooperative Society Limited, Hopkins Village

Started in 1984, this is the oldest Garifuna women-owned cooperative in Belize. They are working to re-build their hotel, which was twice destroyed by fire. The SDOP grant will enable them to complete their facility, which is used for meetings, catering and selling lunches. Additional funds were approved later for the purchase of an additional cabaña, an extension of kitchen facilities and the development of proper marketing strategies for the business.

FACT

A study revealed that 41.3 percent of the population of Belize lives at or below the poverty line. The main at-risk group in Belize is the children. In 2016, 49 percent of the children in Belize lived in poverty.



A member of the Peralta Youth Association in the nursery created with funds from SDOP-CEMUJER partnership

Funding Unique Youth Programs

Self-Development of People partners with youth project in Dominican Republic

CE-MUJER, SDOP's intermediary partner in the Dominican Republic, has funded the Peralta Youth Association project. The project will help increase the number of coffee plants growing in nurseries and agricultural products to be sold in a new plaza. This type of business did not exist in the community before this project.

FACT

More than a third of the Dominican Republic lives on less than \$1.25 a day and over 20 percent of the country lives in extreme poverty. Most of the poverty in the Dominican Republic is concentrated in the rural areas. The rural poverty rate is about three times as high as the urban poverty rate.



Fideicomiso community residents engage in a reflection and discussion process about their community

Puerto Rico Collaborative Initiative

Fideicomiso de la Tierra del Cano Martin Pena, San Juan, Puerto Rico

Jointly funded by the One Great Hour of Sharing ministries of Self-Development of People, Disaster Assistance and the Hunger Program, Fideicomiso partners with community members seeking to recover from hurricanes and protects its member's livelihoods by achieving collective ownership of the land. Ecological improvements in the river that residents live along had threatened to gentrify the area and price people out of their homes. The Fideicomiso land trust will also assist with relocation of some members to other neighborhoods within the trust with staff assistance. Grant funds will make it possible to have an additional staff person.

FACT

There are 1,363 land trusts across the United States, according to the most recent National Land Trust Census, released Dec. 1, 2016, by the Land Trust Alliance.



Families of the Catawba Cultural Preservation Project in Rock Hill, South Carolina

Securing Healthy Food on Tribal Land

Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People partners with South Carolina Catawba tribe project

With the Catawba Cultural Preservation Project in Rock Hill, South Carolina, families of the Catawba Tribe are working together to address issues of current and future food security. Many families are unable to acquire fresh, healthy food because they are without transportation and live far from a store that sells fresh vegetables. The grant will help this group of families learn how to grow food on their own land through hydroponic and permaculture methods.

FACT

The Catawba are the only federally recognized tribe in the state of South Carolina.



Members of the Stitching UP Detroit Project display their t-shirts

Providing Economic Opportunity for Youth

Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People partners with Detroit youth collective

Stitching up Detroit is a youth-run screen print and graphic design collective that helps provide a source of income to students. The project does live screen printing events. Project members developed workshops for the Detroit-based nonprofit Alternatives For Girls and four Detroit public schools, which resulted in participants each printing their own designs on T-shirts.

FACT

Stitching up Detroit includes a one-year training program for middle and high school students in graphic design, textile design and screen printing. After completing the training program, young people are able to receive apprenticeships with the Stitching up Detroit Cooperative.



Alianza Agricola members sharing their work at a public event

Driving Access and Identity for Immigrant Farmers

Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People partners with Rochester, New York, farmworker group

The Alianza Agricola serves the needs of undocumented immigrant farmworkers in Western New York. The group's primary aim is to advocate for legislation for access to driver's licenses for mobility and a means of identification for undocumented residents of the state, furthering the New York program "Green Light: Driving Together."

FACT

Did you know Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People was born in Rochester, NY?

WORSHIP RESOURCES FOR SDOP SUNDAY

Call To Worship

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

People: God of mercy, hear our prayers

Leader: For those whose lives and futures are uncertain

People: God of creation, hear our prayers

Leader: For the people where poverty is widespread and whose citizens long for relief and the opportunity to develop their own solutions;

People: God of justice, hear our prayers

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

People: God of healing and compassion, hear our prayers

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

People: God of empowerment, hear our prayers

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

People: God of peace, hear our prayers

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

Prayer of Confession

All: Merciful God, forgive us, for we live as if the world revolves around our needs. Forgive us, Holy God, for out of fear and scarcity, we waste all that you have entrusted to us and destroy resources that can be used to nourish and uplift others. Forgive us, Abundant God, for we have become so mired in our luxuries and pleasures, we fail to recognize those around us who are without life's basic necessities. God of great compassion, turn us around. Show us again how to see beyond ourselves and break the idols of scarcity. Use your Holy Spirit to guide us in using our resources to benefit all in our community. Amen.

Assurance of God's Forgiveness

L: People of God, fear not, for it is God's intention to forgive us and save us from our selfishness and fear so that we can freely participate in God's realm by providing for others.

R: God is within and among us; because of God's love we are delivered from behaviors that diminish the possibility to live and serve others.

L: As a people of faith, God calls us to use our resources to create new and awesome opportunities to touch and empower the lives of others.

R: With faith and hope, we will participate in God's saving love by standing firm with those who are oppressed and cast out of the mainstream of society.

All: Thanks and praise be to the God of living bread. Amen.

Prayer of Illumination

L: Help us, O God, to discern your will through the Scriptures and in our everyday lives. Surround us with the cloud of witnesses who can inspire and move us to compassion and new vistas of growth. God of the disinherited, put us in touch once more with Jesus Christ, the one who walks with and loves the poor. Come alive in our hearts and in our midst as we listen daily for your word of truth. Amen.

Offering Prayer

Dios, nuestro proveedor, damos gracias por las bendiciones en nuestras vidas; oramos por aquellos que aún no conocen las bendiciones de la justicia, la libertad o la esperanza. Pedimos paz, seguridad y recursos para el empoderamiento y oportunidades a nuestros hermanos y hermanas que son pobres, oprimidos y desfavorecidos, a través del amor de Cristo y la comodidad del Espíritu. Amén.

God, our provider, we give thanks for the blessings in our lives; we pray for those who do not yet know the blessings of justice, freedom or hope. We ask for peace, safety and the resources for the empowerment and opportunity of our brothers and sisters who are poor, oppressed and disadvantaged, through the love of Christ and the comfort of the Spirit. Amen.

SERMON

Partners In Building God's Household In The Wilderness

An invitation to reflect together on Genesis 21:8–20

Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty

Take a moment to read Genesis 21:8–20.

8 The child [Isaac] grew and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. 9 But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac. 10 So she said to Abraham, "Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac." 11 The matter was very distressing to Abraham on account of his son. 12 But God said to Abraham, "Do not be distressed because of the boy and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be named for you. 13 As for the son of the slave woman, I will make a nation of him also, because he is your offspring." 14 So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she

departed, and wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.

15 When the water in the skin was gone, she cast the child under one of the bushes. 16 Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot; for she said, “Do not let me look on the death of the child.” And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. 17 And God heard the voice of the boy; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, “What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. 18 Come, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make a great nation of him.” 19 Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. She went, and filled the skin with water, and gave the boy a drink.

20 God was with the boy, and he grew up; he lived in the wilderness, and became an expert with the bow.

Reflecting on the Passage

After reading Genesis 21:8–20, take a moment to reflect and write down or record your initial reactions and interpretation of the meaning of this story. Here are some questions to stimulate your reflections.

- Whom do you identify with most in the story — Abraham, Sarah, Hagar or Ishmael?
- How you think those who first heard it in the ancient world would have interpreted this story?
- How do you understand the meaning of

this story in our contemporary context and for your own ministry?

Hinson-Hasty's Reflections

For seven or eight years, one of our children attended a summer camp on the coast of North Carolina. As you probably know, getting a child prepared for a four-week stint of life in the great outdoors requires a lot of planning. You have to gather up all the clothes needed so that the wash only has to be sent out once in addition to a number of other things like medical exam forms, flashlights, river pants, pre-addressed and stamped envelopes to write home, sunscreen, toiletries and towels — the list could go on. One summer when I was the designated chauffeur to take our daughter to camp, I felt that we had planned, prepared and covered every single minute detail. We were so ready; I could not imagine anything going wrong on that trip.

Our plane arrived safely in Raleigh without a hitch and then we proceeded to take the shuttle bus to the rental car agency. We chose the exact car we wanted at the rental agency and proceeded to exit the lot stopping just briefly at the kiosk for the manager to check my license and give me a receipt. I handed him my license and while he was looking at it, I started to input the camp address in Google Maps.

The manager said, “Ma’am, your license is expired.”

I flashed him a quick look of indignation. “No, it isn’t.”

He quickly pointed to the expiration date with his finger — exactly nine days before

we arrived at the Raleigh-Durham airport. What could go wrong, indeed?!

My cheeks flushed. “I am so sorry. I guess it is expired.”

“Ma’am, we can’t legally rent you this car,” he said.

My stomach sank. Seeing my anxiety, the manager of the rental car agency tried to make it all better by saying that it happens a lot more often than you think.

Nevertheless, he said, “We can’t rent you this car, ma’am.”

I pulled the car over to the side of the lot, unpacked our things near the shuttle bus so that we could return to the terminal, and looked over at my daughter who was getting more anxious by the minute. I asked her to be patient while I thought through a plan to deal with the situation.

Within a few moments, somewhat familiar surroundings of a state and an airport I had traveled to or through a number of times became a sort of wilderness. We felt vulnerable. We were in an unfamiliar city an hour and a half from where we were going to stay that night and three hours from the camp where she needed to check in by 9 the next morning. We knew our destination, but at that moment, we had no idea how we were going to get there.

I wonder if something like this has ever happened to you. Have you ever experienced a time when you were in the wilderness? Have you ever felt vulnerable and alone without any idea how you were going to accomplish what you needed to do? Or, worse, have you experienced a time when you were cast out and cast off by others in your family or community? Have you discovered yourself pushed out

into the wilderness wondering how your future would be secured?

Wilderness and family are strong themes that surface throughout biblical stories, particularly in the Hebrew bible. In the story of Abraham, Sarah and Hagar, you enter into the tension building within a family as questions about who will carry on the family line emerge. Who are the chosen ones? Who falls outside the circle? Who will be pushed to the periphery, even forced to travel alone?

There are two chapters in Genesis, 16 and 21, that focus on the story of five main characters — Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Isaac and Ishmael. Abraham and Sarah may be more familiar to us because it is Isaac, their son, who becomes the ancestor of Israel. Hagar is more of a stranger. Jewish scholars emphasize that her name relates to the Hebrew word *ger*, meaning stranger, resident alien or immigrant.

Have you ever felt vulnerable and alone without any idea how you were going to accomplish what you needed to do?

In Christian and Jewish thought, Hagar’s story is often told as a tale of a woman being sent out with her young son into the wilderness by a barren and jealous wife, Sarah. Sarah is the one who holds the privilege and the power within the confines of the patriarchal family structure and yet she experiences a wilderness of her own. She is barren and unable to conceive of a son in a society and family that traced its origins to the father, valued motherhood as the primary fulfillment of a woman’s identity, and the birth of sons as a woman’s social security. If Sarah had no son, then who would be Abraham’s rightful heir? Who would inherit his

fortune? If something happened to Abraham, who would secure Sarah's future? Tension within Abraham's family abounds throughout this narrative — tension about who has or does not have wealth, security and continued promise of prosperity. Sarah tries to solve the situation by sending Abraham to Hagar so that the Egyptian girl, Sarah's slave or maid, can bear a son.

Biblical scholar Phyllis Trible describes Hagar as the "prototype of not only special but all mothers in Israel." Hagar is the first "woman to bear a child" in the Hebrew bible, "the first woman to hear an annunciation, the only one to receive a divine promise of descendants, and the first to weep for her dying child." Even in light of these "firsts," Hagar's reality is the ultimate contrast to that of Sarah's. Hagar is young and fertile. She is the most vulnerable with the least privilege, but she holds the greatest promise to build her power and her authority in the economy of the household by giving birth to a son.

Johanna van Wijk-Bos, professor emerita at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, emphasizes the importance of the Hebrew wording used throughout the Genesis story in chapters 16 and 21. Van Wijk-Bos invites readers to look for words that refer to the senses. Emotions are palpable throughout the narrative — words are used to describe seeing, looking, hearing, laughing and weeping. The text itself draws us into the emotions felt by the characters and invites us to wonder who is seen, what God sees, what Abraham sees, what Sarah sees and what Hagar sees. We have to look at their world through their eyes and listen for who laughs and see who smiles; take notice of who hears or who is heard throughout their interactions.

Have you ever experienced a time when you were in the wilderness?

Once Hagar "sees" that she and Abraham are pregnant, she becomes of no account in Sarah's "eyes." Hagar flees. In the scene announcing the birth of Hagar's son, an angel of the Holy One appears to her and asks where she is going. The angel tells Hagar to return to Abraham's house and to name her son Ishmael, meaning "God hears." An intriguing aspect to this part of the story from chapter 16 is that Hagar calls out God's name. By calling out God's name, she interrupts the story that defined the ancient patriarchal economy. Neither her son nor the continuation of the family line will bring Hagar freedom. Rather it is the Holy One, "the God who sees me" — the God who sees and acts within and among the most vulnerable in the story.

In chapter 21, Sarah tells Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael away when she "sees" Ishmael and his mother laughing. Abraham opens his eyes one day early in the morning, takes bread and a skin of water, gives it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulders along with the child, and sends them both away. Hagar departs, and wanders about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba ("the well of the oath"). In Genesis, we then lose sight of Hagar in the biblical narrative. Abraham seems to have nothing more to do with Hagar or Ishmael but it is Isaac, Sarah's son, whom "God smiles upon."

What we are reading about in this story is a God who sees, hears and acts within and among the tensions building in Abraham's family — tension about power, privilege, fertility, barrenness, insiders, outsiders, chosenness and distribution of resources. As van Wijk-Bos observes, the "lines [of kinship] seem to be less

sharply drawn and God's blessing does not remain confined to one group alone." In the end, God promises both Isaac and Ishmael great nations.

In U.S. culture, I think we have a tendency to think of things, events, ideas and stories in light of our own individual experiences. But the narrative here is not a narrative of division between an "us" and a "them," but rather a story about how to forge a future between "us" and "another us," a story of "us" and "others." The "I" is never independent from the "we." Family in this context is interrelated and bound by a covenant that reaches beyond ancient kinship ties and traditions.

For each of the traditions that trace its origins to Abraham, Sarah and Hagar, the same destiny and desires are true — discovering community in the wilderness; abundance and sustenance for one's daily life; victory over artificial social boundaries of gender, class or color; being seen, remembered and heard by others and God. Perhaps most important in this particular story is that the actions of women are visible, seen and remembered. Both Sarah and Hagar become mothers of faithful peoples. In different ways, they create experiences out of barrenness, dryness and wilderness. This is no small intrusion into the larger ancient patriarchal economy.

We knew our destination, but at that moment, had no idea how we were going to get there.

For Muslims, the story continues in a way that challenges us to consider the importance of calling upon God's name in the wilderness. Neither Hagar nor Sarah are named in the Qur'an. Hagar's name

in Arabic is Hajira, a name associated with the idea of going into the wilderness for the sake of God's mission. Hagar's name conveys her willingness to build God's household out of nothing but the sand in a barren, dry, deserted land. She is not understood to be a victim of a jealous woman, but rather a survivor who shows that neither class nor privilege can deter any one who has faith in God. Riffat Hassan, a scholar of Islam and professor emerita at the University of Louisville, observes, "When one is in the wilderness, without the protection of any familiar framework or faces, one's faith in God and one's self is put to a real test."

In Muslim traditions, the story does not end with Hagar being sent away. Abraham continues his relationship with both Hagar and Ishmael. When Hagar goes out into the desert, she does not beg Abraham to return to her previous home. Her exile is not a place of destitution, but she is Abraham's partner



in building God's house in a land with few resources. Her wilderness becomes a place of agency, inspiration and empowerment that leads to new creation, the creation of new community.

Stories of Hagar in Muslim traditions and

in the Hebrew Bible both refer to a spring of water that miraculously emerges in the wilderness when Hagar realizes that she is about to run out of water for herself and her son. In the Muslim account of the story, Hagar runs back and forth looking frantically for water in an effort to keep up her milk supply to feed her son. Because of her efforts, an angel named Gabriel appears and guides her to the spring called the Zam Zam. She is not alone in the wilderness. God is with her, guiding her through a barren land. Still today, the spring is believed to have miraculous powers because it attracted companions for Hagar and a new community was born.

I told the story earlier of my brief wilderness experience when I was surprised by the expiration of my license. In our current context, there are obviously far more challenging places to be standing and questioning whom we will see, how will we be seen, who is with us in the wilderness, and how we will call upon God's name to fulfill a covenant promise for all of us. What can we learn from stories about Sarah and Hagar in our own experiences in the wilderness, in barren, dry places? What can we learn about a God who offers a blessing far beyond a single group alone?

When I think about wilderness today, images of people on the move as economic migrants, asylum seekers and refugees easily come to my mind. Immigration policy is one of the most divisive and contentious issues in contemporary U.S. politics. The public debate about immigration in the U.S. is primarily framed by politicians and the media as an issue related to security of our nation's border or in terms of the impact on our economy. More than half of U.S. Americans think of immigrants as an

“economic burden” because they believe that immigrants take “away jobs, housing and health care.” Recent studies show that public opposition to immigration is triggered by downturns within specific sectors of employment that make it more likely for native workers to think that immigration comes at a higher cost than benefit. Citizens employed in growing sectors of the economy are far more likely to support immigration than those who work in industries that are shrinking.

Have you discovered yourself pushed out into the wilderness wondering how your future would be secured?

Evangelical Protestants, white mainline Protestants and white non-Hispanic Catholics make up nearly 60 percent of the U.S. population. A Pew Forum Poll conducted in 2006 showed that “large segments of the public — including many Catholics, mainline Protestants and Evangelicals — harbor serious concerns about immigrants and immigration.” White Evangelicals are “particularly wary” of immigrants as a threat to U.S. culture and customs. At the same time, studies suggest that those who are the most “religiously committed” are less likely to have negative feelings toward immigrants. Thus, religious leaders have a key role and responsibility to play in shaping public debates about immigration, and can offer essential, yet neglected, theological perspectives to our larger public understanding of welcoming the stranger, the alien, the immigrant, the purpose of the economy, and the value and importance of work and labor. Our wilderness today can become a place of agency, inspiration and empowerment that leads to the creation of new community.

Let me offer a more concrete example. The church that I attend recently sponsored the resettlement of a family from Syria to Louisville. The children in this family of five range in age from about 7 to 13. I doubt I need to say much about the conditions of their life in Syria, but it is worth mentioning that the father of the family owned a nice small grocery business in his hometown. He was just a regular person trying to make ends meet and support his family. Earlier in the war, he lost his leg when a car he was driving ran over a roadside bomb. I have no way to imagine what it was like to live in the wilderness of war in Syria, but I can imagine how I would feel if I knew one of my children might encounter a roadside bomb when going to school or riding a bike or just walking home from the store. They did what most, if not all of us, would do. Our Syrian friends fled the violence and threat of war, wandering through Turkey and Jordan. After a short time, all of the resources they had in Jordan ran out. So they applied to come to the U.S., but it took two years after they applied for refugee status before they were granted entrance to the U.S. and for us to see and hear their greeting, “salaam alaikum,” when they arrived at the Louisville airport.

What Hagar’s story challenges us to consider is that we too can collaborate in building God’s house.

In January 2017, the Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer organized a rally at the Muhammad Ali Center to support immigrants and refugees in response to tensions and fears created by the Muslim immigration ban. My husband, Lee, and I gathered with outside the center with nearly 5,000 others. The event was moving. We saw so many of our

neighbors, friends from school and work, other parents, and local political and religious leaders. There were so many people in the courtyard outside the center that we had to move almost as one body to get around. There was no sense of “us” and “them,” but rather what we were: one community together.

Our wilderness today can become a place of agency, inspiration, and empowerment that leads to new creation, the creation of new community.

When we left that event that night and walked to our car, we crossed a busy street and ran into the mother of the family that we helped get settled in our city. It was dark and the night lighting made the street seem unfamiliar. We began to look around and get our bearings and soon noticed the father of the family getting out of the driver’s seat of his car and standing up on his crutches. The strangers now friends, immigrants, seeking a place they could call home, were taking some considerable risk to be part of that gathering at the Ali Center. However, they were willing to take the risk because they want to find and help to create, to partner with God to build peace in a world where family tensions between “us” and “them” are on the rise. They, like all of us, are imperfect people through whom God creates community beyond considerable “family” tensions. I can honestly say that Lee and I could see and feel the presence of the most Holy One as when we met our friends face-to-face on the city street.

... have you experienced a time when you were cast out and cast off by others in your family or community?

What can we continue to learn from stories about Sarah and Hagar that help us find sustenance in our own experience of the wilderness, in barren, dry places? God works through us, just imperfect people, to help us see, feel and sense a community beyond the tensions created by a story defined by “us” and “them.” What Hagar’s story challenges us to consider is that we too can collaborate in building God’s house. We too can discover refreshing springs of water even when the land seems barren and dry. Our wildernesses can become places of agency, inspiration and empowerment that lead the creation of new community.

May that be our aim, this day and in the weeks to come. Amen.

Brief Biography of Author

Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty’s most recent book *The Problem of Wealth: A Christian Response to a Culture of Affluence* (Orbis 2017), won the Catholic Press Association 2018 first place award for a book related to Catholic Social Teaching. She is a Minister of Word and Sacrament in the PC(USA), a theology professor, and currently serves as chair of the department of theology at Bellarmine University in Louisville, Kentucky. She is frequently called upon to preach and speak on faith and public life in a variety of settings. Elizabeth can be reached at ehinsonhasty@bellarmine.edu.

SDOP HYMNS

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

Other suggested hymns:

Justice is a Journey Onward

Celebrate Hope

Help Us Accept Each Other (Page 754)

When the Poor Ones (Page 762)

May the God of Hope Go With Us
(Page 765)

CALL TO ACTION / GET INVOLVED WITH PRESBYTERIAN COMMITTEE ON THE SELF-DEVELOPMENT OF PEOPLE!

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

- Sermons and liturgy (which you can use to plan your Sunday worship service).
- Wallet card PDS #25422-07-001 (includes basic information about SDOP in a wallet-size card).
- Celebrate Hope poster PDS # 74350-05-005 (a colorful SDOP poster).

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).
- SDOP trifold brochure (Spanish) PDS # 25422-14-001 (include basic information needed to apply for a grant and stories about SDOP partner).
- Call the national office for additional printed resources at 888-728-7228, ext. 5781 or 5792.

Suggested Reading List:

The Problem with Wealth by Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty

Evicted by Matthew Desmond

Always with Us? What Jesus Really Said about the Poor by Liz Theoharis

The New Jim Crow by Michelle Alexander

From Dream to Reality by James A. Gittings

Dead Aid by Dambisa Moyo

Walking with the Poor by Bryant Myers

The Third Reconstruction by William J. Barber II

Toxic Charity by Robert Lupton

PC (USA) Policies

World of Hurt, World of Life

Living Through Economic Crisis

Giving Opportunity

Consider giving directly to SDOP at presbyterianmission.org/donate/E051602

SDOP is supported by generous gifts to the One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS). Contribute to the OGHS Self-Development of People online at presbyterianmission.org/donate/og200000; by phone at 800-872-3283; or to send a check, please write "OG200000" on the memo line and mail to:

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

Questions?

English — 800-728-7228, ext. 5781 or 5792

Spanish — 800-728-7228, ext. 5781 or 5790

Email: sdop@pcusa.org

Fax: (502) 569-8001



STOP THE CYCLE OF POVERTY!

Register for our webinar

March 21, 12:00 – 1:30 p.m. Eastern time

Space is limited.

Sign up to join the Self-Development of People webinar *The Least of These: Engaging in the Work of Preventing and Alleviating Poverty* as together we seek to stop the cycle of poverty.

- This four-part webinar series challenges us to go beyond charity and take a more holistic view of poverty, equipping teams to create real and lasting change.
- Hear from leaders in the PC(USA) and in community development as you or your team are guided through core principles that go beyond charity and build relationships.

›To register, or for more information, email nina.lewis@pcusa.org

Registration is limited to 15 people.

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 - er ment! 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 il - 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.

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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, 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.

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

Promote Justice

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

Build Stronger Communities

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

Seek Economic Equity

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

Connect with us

Phone: 1-800-728-7228 ext. 5781

Online Resources: www.pcusa.org/sdop



facebook.com/SelfDevelopmentOfPeoplesdop



youtube.com/user/selfdevelopment/videos



vimeo.com/260443997



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