

Presbyterians believe that the best decisions are made when the broadest possible representation of our diversity participates. We believe in the equality of all people before God, and therefore our system represents a parity, an equality, of persons. There are always both elders and ministers qualified to vote in every governing body. We seek to have women as well as men represented. We encourage people of every race and ethnicity to participate. Jack Rogers, former General Assembly Moderator, “How Presbyterians Make Decisions,” April 2003, *Presbyterians Today*; <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/what-we-believe/decisions/>

No other domestic issue has so engaged the Assemblies as that of race. Beginning with the 1946 General Assembly of the PCUSA which declared: “. . . This General Assembly renounces the principle of segregation in race relations as undemocratic and unchristian . . .” (PCUSA, 1946, p. 211), the Assemblies have pleaded for racial justice and supported measures leading to racial equality both within the church and the society. Presbyterian Social Witness Compilation, Chapter Eight: Race and the Rights of Minorities in America. [http://index.pcusa.org/nxt/gateway.dll?f=templates\\$fn=default.htm](http://index.pcusa.org/nxt/gateway.dll?f=templates$fn=default.htm)

9.43 In each time and place, there are particular problems and crises through which God calls the church to act. The church, guided by the Spirit, humbled by its own complicity and instructed by all attainable knowledge, seeks to discern the will of God and learn how to obey in these concrete situations. The following are particularly urgent at the present time.

9.44 a. God has created the peoples of the earth to be one universal family. In his reconciling love, God overcomes the barriers between sisters and brothers and breaks down every form of discrimination based on racial or ethnic difference, real or imaginary. The church is called to bring all people to receive and uphold one another as persons in all relationships of life: in employment, housing, education, leisure, marriage, family, church, and the exercise of political rights. Therefore, the church labors for the abolition of all racial discrimination and ministers to those injured by it. Congregations, individuals, or groups of Christians who exclude, dominate, or patronize others, however subtly, resist the Spirit of God and bring contempt on the faith which they profess.

https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/theologyandworship/pdfs/confess67.pdf

Scripture compels us to an increasing affirmation of the dignity and value of every human, all of whom share the “image of God.” This reflection includes mutual support and empowerment of each individual and voice. Exercising and defending every person’s right to vote is an essential embodiment of this Scriptural ethic that is shared by Christians and others. As faith leaders, we seek opportunities in the public square to embody and protect this scriptural mandate. We view exercising and defending every person’s right and responsibility to vote as a way of lifting up the full image of God....

When people do not exercise their right to vote, our democracy can decay. When we do not vote, we miss an opportunity to create a “government of the people, by the people, and for the people.” To the extent that state and local governments unjustly disqualify or suppress the votes of any citizen — especially because of skin color, ethnicity, age, ability, past record, economic means, or other reasons — the worth of individuals is eroded and the democratic ideals in our Constitution are undermined and our common life suffers. National Council of Churches, “The Urgent Need to Lift Our Voice in Our Elections,”

October 22, 2018, <http://nationalcouncilofchurches.us/the-urgent-need-to-lift-our-voice-in-our-elections/>

“[F]rom the start of our United States of democratic ideals, *exclusion* from the voting franchise has been the norm. It has taken decade after decade of epic struggles to bring more Americans—ever so gradually—into our country’s voting community [emphasis in original].” Jim Hightower, “2-18 election warning: It should be easy for every citizen to vote. Republicans have made it way, way harder.” The Hightower Lowdown, 20:10 (October 2018), p. 2

Compiled by Robert Joe Lee, November 2018