

## Justice & Witness Mission Team 2017

The mission of the PSEC Justice and Witness Mission Team is to provide leadership and resources to support individual congregations in their justice ministries. The team is open to all volunteers – laity and clergy – who share a passion for social justice and peace issues. Throughout 2017 the Justice & Witness Team held nine monthly conference calls, as well as an in-person dialogue meeting on November 9<sup>th</sup> to get feedback from other interested PSEC clergy.

In 2017 the PSEC Justice & Witness Mission Team completed its two year commitment to implement the 30th General Synod resolution: “Dismantling Discriminatory Systems of Mass Incarceration in the United States.” In September 2017, the Justice & Witness Team began the difficult work of visioning, and identifying how to most effectively serve the needs of the conference and its local congregations. This process involved getting feedback from PSEC stakeholders, including the Conference Consistory. The Justice & Witness Team created goals around: planning conference-wide educational / training events, making public pronouncements on timely social justice issues, and partnering ecumenically with other social justice organizations to increase our effectiveness and impact.

Some developments worth noting:

- Despite the clear mandates included in the General Synod resolution “Dismantling Discriminatory Systems of Mass Incarceration in the United States,” and two years of diligent work on behalf of the Justice & Witness Team, a conference-wide effort to combat mass incarceration never gained traction.
- Through the diligent work of Brea Rarick and others, we overhauled and updated the PSEC Justice & Witness page on the conference website. It now contains the most up-to-date links and resources for a variety of justice issues.
- After discussion and discernment, the PSEC Justice & Witness Team voted unanimously to become a member of the faith-based organization POWER. Attached is a document announcing – as well as explaining – this new collaboration.

The PSEC Justice & Witness Mission Team recognizes that doing social justice in our churches and communities is challenging in the current sociopolitical climate. There are many timely justice issues ranging from environmental and climate protection, to public education, to immigrant and refugee justice, to safeguarding healthcare, poverty, and hunger initiatives, just to name a few. Throughout 2017 our local congregations have had to confront issues ranging from racism, to gun violence, to the opioid epidemic, in very real and personal ways. The PSEC Justice & Witness Mission Team seeks to provide resources to individuals and congregations looking to engage in social justice work in their own settings. Inquiries are always welcome, as are new Justice & Witness volunteers (laity and clergy).

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Leslie Kearney

Chair, PSEC Justice & Witness Mission Team