

"What exactly does the Social Witness and Mission Committee do?"

When the members of the Social Witness and Mission Committee (SW&M) began to voice concerns that the people of this presbytery may have only a vague idea of what SW&M does, it was decided that a short article should be written for Across the Woods. I thought that I would merely go to the "Guidelines of the Presbytery of Transylvania" and copy (or scan if more than a page) the description of our committee. In leafing through the "Guidelines" I noticed that many of the committee descriptions were as long a page, most at least a few sentences. Imagine my shock when I got to SW&M and found the description to be a paltry nine words and two of those are conjunctions: the SW&M Committee "shall promote local and global mission and social justice"! So here goes. . . .

SW&M administers three accounts from which we fund approved grant requests. First is the Two-Cent Hunger Program. Most of the grant requests from this account are to help fund food pantries, but it is not limited to that. In the past we have approved funds for other entities, such as homeless programs (usually within churches). This account is also used to fund Clean Water U scholarships. The Two-Cent Hunger Program is funded entirely by collections from our individual churches' Two-Cent Hunger Offering and offerings at gatherings such as presbytery meetings.

The second account is the Peacemaking Fund. Recent examples of approved Peacemaking grants were to Kentucky Refuge Ministry for resettlement of a Congolese family and to Second PC to help fund David Renick's mission to Palestine. Our committee has not received a Peacemaking Grant request since 2005.

Downloadable Peacemaking grant, Hunger grant, and Clean Water U scholarship forms can be found on our presbytery's web page.

The third account is the Christian Service Ministry (CSM) Fund. The money in this account is from limited and recurring sources and all outlays are designated to the following: Ashland Area Presbyterian Ministries, Interfaith of Breathitt County, Floyd County CSM, Peter Creek CSM, and Westminster Village, Fayette County.

In the future (hopefully near rather than far), our committee will provide a Mission Reporting Form. Each church will be asked to go to the presbytery's web page and report any and all mission activity that it has engaged in. This information will be compiled and made viewable as a .pdf file. The purpose of this form is not be nosy but to serve as means of communication and source of inspiration. Perhaps

your small church would like some ideas on a mission that would be within your means. Perhaps your church already has some mission ideas and would like some guidance or suggestions from those who have engaged in similar mission. Perhaps you need to partner with one or more churches. In these, and other, scenarios the Mission Reporting form could be the place to start.

The committee will continue to vigorously support Living Waters for the World. Of the 190 installations to date, Transylvania Presbytery has installed 15, primarily in the Yucatan.

The committee over the next year or so is going start promoting support of our long term missionaries. In light of the fact that they receive much less financial support from GA than they used to we hope to find ways that ALL of our churches can lend support in some manner. Of course, part of unified giving goes for their support but it simply is not enough. Chew on this statistic: in 1960 there were 2000 Presbyterian missionaries in the field; today, there are 200.

What social justice is to one person may be an unwelcome intrusion to another. Where social witness ends and politics begins is often a very vague line and concern about straying beyond that line is voiced (in one manner or another) in almost everyone of our committee meetings. In addressing divisive issues the committee will always strive to achieve a well informed and inclusive stance. In general, our approach will be, to borrow a phrase, think globally, act locally.