

The Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago

Resolutions Committee 2016

INTRODUCTION:

Historically, the Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago (PCTT) has given prominence to ministering to the real needs of people; in stimulating safe and nurturing environments, as well as creating a culture of care, compassion and concern, based on the principles of fairness and justice. The PCTT has sought, over the years, to be a strong prophetic voice in several political, social and economic issues.

VIOLENCE AND CRIME

Like the rest of the population, the Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago is appalled by the rapid increase in violent, heinous and gruesome crimes, and condemns unequivocally the overwhelming violence and escalation in crime taking place in the schools, work place, family and home, and the nation as a whole.

We recognize that there are various levels of violence and crime and it appears that all are increasing at unacceptable rates, creating collateral damage, threatening both the sanctity and quality of the abundant life of God's creation; and tearing at the very moral and ethical fabric of humanity. We recognize a total disregard for the sanctity of human life and that a greater effort must be made to identify the root causes of crime, including a total breakdown in family life and values, poverty, substance abuse, racism, unemployment and human and drug trafficking. In this month of April, as we commemorate National Child Abuse Prevention Month, we stand against all forms of violence and abuse directed toward women and children.

The PCTT as a community of faith, acknowledges the urgent need to reorganize our priorities and recommit our resources to confront the violence and crime in our midst; to hear the pain, anger and frustration that come with and from violence and crime; to examine our own attitudes and actions for how they contribute to or diminish violence and crime in our society; to help people confront the violence and crime in our hearts and lives; to hold major institutions accountable, including government, the media and the criminal justice system; to move beyond the often empty rhetoric of national debate; to promote more personal responsibility and broader social responsibility in the policies and programs that our Church has in place to counteract social ills; to work for legislation that empowers the weak and vulnerable; to overcome the tragedy of violence and crime and confronting all forms of violence especially against women and children; to promote education and training in nonviolence; to respond to victims of violence and crime, hearing their anguish and defending their dignity; to strengthen families by putting the needs of children and families first in our national priorities and community initiatives.

We, therefore as a community of faith call on the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to develop an appropriate response to dealing with this scourge by harnessing all the resources at all levels of our nation with immediate effect. To enter into meaningful dialogue and consultation with civil society including but not limited to Faith Based Organizations (FBO's) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's); to develop holistic preventative and curative programs and strategies e.g. community mediation and counseling for both victims and perpetrators; to collaborate with the existing stakeholders in the restorative justice system e.g. Police, Defence Force, Judiciary, Social Workers, Community Mediators and Counsellors; and with all who are strategically placed in communities to make both their human and physical resources available including personnel, schools, churches, temples, mosques as may become necessary to implement relevant programs to alleviate this evil plaguing and causing havoc in our society.

RECESSION/UNEMPLOYMENT AND POVERTY

We understand and accept that the reason for the present economic situation in which our country finds itself is the result of many and varied causes. We do not seek to find the root cause or to attribute blame. We believe that all conditions which befall humankind must be confronted through a position of Christian faith grounded in knowledge of a God who is love.

The reality of our present conditions will cause our faith and conscience to be tested. As we face the reality of economic recession and consequent unemployment and the resulting cloud of increased poverty, we see only one way forward. We believe that as with all adversity we should respond as our faith guides. Through God's Word, we are reminded that we are called to love one another as our Lord loved us.

Through the action of love for each other, all stakeholders, business owners, shareholders, employees and government should recognize the contribution they provide towards the benefit and upliftment of the society. Business enterprises are in fact the building blocks of our modern civilization and are in fact a manifestation of God's Grace to us. As a member church, the PCTT, adheres to the principles of Fair Trade as outlined by the World Council of Churches. As such we call on all leaders and owners in business to act responsibly in making decisions which would affect the employment and lives of their employees. We call on the workers of the nations to act responsibly in their performance of duties remembering that employment is grace from God and that the service rendered to their employers is a vocation from God.

We call for all members of the productive sector to rise to this challenge of the present economic recession to act in a responsible manner. We call on all members of the population to understand that as a result of this present situation productive, healthy and honest persons through no action of their own will fall into poverty. We confirm our belief that poverty is an affliction and not a choice. As a result we believe that all members of the population are called to work together to erase the effects of the onset of poverty on fellow citizens.

We believe that through the Grace of God we will overcome this present challenge and as God has allowed us to in the past we will arise out of this a stronger and united people, a vision to the wider world of diversity and harmony exposing our national watch words of Discipline Tolerance and Production.

CONSTRUCTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The PCTT recognises that social media can be used for the widespread dissemination of information, ideas and concerns in a short timeframe. It is surely an effective tool, which most persons have at their immediate disposal that can be a means of spreading and encouraging values, ethics and the love of God.

Too often, we have noted that social media is abused in a manner that causes the highlighting of the ills of our society over the aspects to be celebrated. Our youths are bombarded with photos, videos and posts that do not enrich their understanding of life nor do they give them a sense of identity and self-worth.

The PCTT urges that the population - men, women and youths - who are users of social media in any form, seek to diligently create an atmosphere that is non-judgmental, nurturing and supportive. Our

posts, be they videos, photos or the expression of our thoughts, should be geared to building up one another, instilling morals and values, showing that indeed every creed, every race, every person has a place in which the transformative love of God can be found. Our country is in dire need of a praying, unified, safe and nourishing population, especially in these uncertain times. May we all use our resources to bring these concepts to reality.

CONCLUSION:

The Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago has a deep and rich history of ecumenical witness and interfaith relations and we therefore pledge to continue working with our fellow citizens to promote the Gospel of Christ - love and peace among all God's people. We pledge to ensure that the systems which are in place for Mission and Outreach in each of our 106 Churches will be utilized to ease the burdens of families who are facing greater economic hardships. We pledge through our Board of Social Responsibility and the Youth Mission Arm, Souled Out Servants, to support individuals and families within our communities to cope in these challenging and changing. We pledge to utilize our resources and personnel, to partner with all stakeholders and to pray unceasingly for the advancement and unity of our beloved nation.

We lift up our prayer to Almighty God for the well-being of our nation, for the guidance of our President and Prime Minister, our Parliament and all our leaders who govern and exercise authority that we may all work together for justice and equality and the good of all citizens. May God bless our Church and Nation! Do contact us via our website pctt.org.tt if more information is needed on our social outreach programs.