

“The Charter For Compassion”
From the Session of the Takoma Park Presbyterian Church
An Overture endorsed by the National Capital Presbytery
February 20, 2010

Whereas “In daily life, Jesus took ordinary acts of human compassion— healing the sick, feeding the hungry, washing feet— and translated them into ways of serving God.” (Book of Order W-1.2004)

Whereas “God sends the church in the power of the Holy Spirit to exercise compassion in the world (feeding the hungry, comforting the grieving, caring for the sick, visiting the prisoners, freeing the captives, sheltering the homeless, befriending the lonely).” (Book of Order W-7.3000) And “Concern for the world may be enacted in prayer and ministries of compassion, justice, peacemaking, and witness.” (Book of Order W-3.5302)

Whereas “Discipleship may be expressed beyond the church cooperating with all who work for compassion and reconciliation.” (Book of Order W-4.3002d)

Whereas 150,000 people of the Abrahamic faiths and beyond, from over 180 countries, contributed to the Charter for Compassion.

Whereas the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington dedicated its 30th anniversary interfaith concert to the Charter for Compassion, and the National Council of Churches USA has endorsed the Charter,

Whereas the Session of the Takoma Park Presbyterian Church has endorsed, affirmed and joined this global movement with the Charter for Compassion.

The Session of the Takoma Park Presbyterian Church asks that the

1. The National Capital Presbytery endorse the Charter for Compassion
2. The National Capital Presbytery encourage its churches and members to
 - a. Teach and learn about compassion;
 - b. Engage in creative acts of compassion;
 - c. Sign the Charter for Compassion online
www.charterforcompassion.org.
3. The National Capital Presbytery petition the General Assembly of the PCUSA to endorse the Charter of Compassion and communicate that support to all congregations in the PCUSA

Charter For Compassion

The principle of compassion lies at the heart of all religious, ethical and spiritual traditions, calling us always to treat all others as we wish to be treated ourselves. Compassion impels us to work tirelessly to alleviate the suffering of our fellow creatures, to dethrone ourselves from the centre of our world and put another there, and to honour the inviolable sanctity of every single human being, treating everybody, without exception, with absolute justice, equity and respect.

It is also necessary in both public and private life to refrain consistently and empathically from inflicting pain. To act or speak violently out of spite, chauvinism, or self-interest, to impoverish, exploit or deny basic rights to anybody, and to incite hatred by denigrating others – even our enemies – is a denial of our common humanity. We acknowledge that we have failed to live compassionately and that some have even increased the sum of human misery in the name of religion.

We therefore call upon all men and women ~ to restore compassion to the centre of morality and religion ~ to return to the ancient principle that any interpretation of scripture that breeds violence, hatred or disdain is illegitimate ~ to ensure that youth are given accurate and respectful information about other traditions, religions and cultures ~ to encourage a positive appreciation of cultural and religious diversity ~ to cultivate an informed empathy with the suffering of all human beings – even those regarded as enemies.

We urgently need to make compassion a clear, luminous and dynamic force in our polarized world. Rooted in a principled determination to transcend selfishness, compassion can break down political, dogmatic, ideological and religious boundaries. Born of our deep interdependence, compassion is essential to human relationships and to a fulfilled humanity. It is the path to enlightenment, and indispensable to the creation of a just economy and a peaceful global community.

(November 12, 2009, www.charterforcompassion.org)