Dear Committee on International Engagement,

Greetings from the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship as you prepare to serve at the 225th General Assembly. As Presbyterians, we all affirm that Peacemaking is the believers’ calling. The need for peace is nowhere more obvious or more critical than in the area of international relations. Our world today is plagued with armed conflicts on four continents, many of them fueled by oppression, injustice, and violation of human rights. The conflicts in Eastern Europe and on the Korean peninsula are of special concern, because many of the nations involved are armed with nuclear weapons.

The Committee on International Engagement has an opportunity to give prayerful consideration to the items of business before you guiding the Presbyterian Church in our calling to be peacemakers in this violent world. Because reducing violence is the focus of our work, we offer a few comments here. Thank you for reading.

As you act, have courage! And have a great experience in this hybrid GA. Please call on us if we can help or join the Facebook community: presbys following GA225

Sincerely,
Rev. David Ensign, PPF Interim Executive Director
info@presbypeacefellowship.org

[INT-01] Affirming the Effectiveness of Nonmilitary, Collaborative International Approaches to Resolving Conflict: asking that insights from the recent exploration of the Doctrine of Discovery be applied to our understanding of U.S. foreign and military history. The Presbyterian Peace Fellowship SUPPORTS this overture. It asks us to reject the principles of exceptionalism and unilateral power which have led to overuse of military force. It affirms the effectiveness of nonmilitary efforts such as diplomacy, and calls for consultation with church partners and impacted communities when developing foreign policy. Recommendation 5 has financial implications if it is assumed that international partners would attend a series of in-person meetings. If these costs are a stumbling block, Recommendation 5 could be amended by the committee to suggest electronic consultation or be omitted if absolutely necessary. We support consultation with impacted communities through a variety of ways that do not require in-person travel.

[INT-05] Seeking Hope Amid Despair in Central America; prepared with input from many partners in the region and describing the realities that have led to increased migration, often at great risk, to the U.S. southern border. The recommendations for mission partnerships, solidarity actions, and a new study guide are excellent. PPF supports this action.

[INT-15] On Advocating for a Peace Agreement in the Korean Peninsula; concerning the not-yet-ended Korean War, and endorsing the “Korea Peace Appeal,” a signature campaign promoted by our church partners in Korea, which urges the United States, to negotiate a peace agreement to bring the Korean War to an official end after 70 years of hostilities. PPF supports this action.

[INT-17] Afghanistan: A Time to Mend; naming some of the actions still needed to end our military involvement. The recommendation about refugees might be modified to help them reach any nation where they have relatives or support instead of only NATO countries. The final recommendation may be the most important – to mourn all lives lost in all wars. PPF supports this action.

Overtures on Israel-Palestine:
PPF supports all of these actions:


[INT-10] A Call for Ending the Siege of Gaza and Collective Punishment of Innocent Palestinian and Israeli Citizens

[INT-13] On Designating May 15 as the Palestinian Nakba Remembrance Day: PPF
adds its voice to those of the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) and the Racial Equity Advocacy Committee (REAC) in urging the G.A. to approve these items.

**PPF encourages more discernment about these items of business:**

**[INT-04] Jerusalem 3, 2, 1: Three Faiths, Two Peoples, and One Human Family:** a lengthy statement of concern about Jerusalem. The impact of the report could have been enhanced by centering the actual voices and experiences of Palestinians who live in Jerusalem. It commends groups working for peaceful coexistence but fails to issue a strong call for bold actions of solidarity and accompaniment to support this work. It supports the Leahy Law, linking foreign aid to human rights, but misses the opportunity to call for an immediate end to all military aid to Israel. We encourage the committee to strengthen the recommendations of this report.

**[INT-16] Resolution on Sanctions:** advocating accountability about sanctions that may harm civilians. The recommendation needs clarification, since it seems to give church agencies the ability to nullify General Assembly approvals of sanctions without the action of a future GA. It also does not address situations such as the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement in Palestine, where the affected communities are the ones who are requesting the sanctions, with willingness to absorb the impacts in order to achieve a greater justice.

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**UKRAINE**

We appreciate this **Statement on Ukraine by Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly PCUSA 4/12/22**

As the war in Ukraine continues with daily revelations of the atrocities committed, we feel the horror and mourn with our Ukrainian siblings. News reports reveal Russia’s destruction of basic infrastructure (water and electricity), hospitals and other civilian targets. Human rights reports now confirm the torture and killing of civilians in Bucha and other communities. In a country of 40 million people, at least half have been directly impacted by the violence. The number of Ukrainian refugees has already surpassed the prediction of 4 million when the war first began.

There are many reasons that people in the U.S. are drawn to and at times even consumed by the war in Ukraine and the suffering of the Ukrainian people. There are the obvious reasons such as daily news reports, personal connections to families of Ukrainian descent and more recent Ukrainian immigrants. For Presbyterians, there are historical and current ties to Reformed churches in Ukraine and throughout the region. These stories of someone we know (or who knows someone we know) make their suffering personal. The history of two world wars, the Cold War and the nuclear arms race add another layer of anxiety about where this all will lead. We wonder what can stop this war. How will it end?

Let this be a moment to remember that this is part of our human history and our human condition. In the compassion we feel for the Ukrainian refugees, let us be determined to act for peace. May our heartfelt compassion be a call for prayer, donations and advocacy to our government to continue to vigorously oppose this war.

Christians, and yes, Presbyterians, are compelled to stand for an end to hostilities whether waged by individuals or by nations. As followers of the Prince of Peace, our call is to be advocates for peaceful and diplomatic resolutions during times of disagreement and conflict. When nations fight, the innocents suffer, the elderly are abused and children lose their lives. We are constantly reminded by the prophet Isaiah that God detests war and calls us to gather in the peaceful presence of the Lord. "Many peoples shall come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that (God) may teach us (God’s) ways and that we may walk in (God’s) paths.’ … (God) shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.” (Isaiah 2:3-4)

May we work for that day when war is no more as we pray, advocate and work for peace in Ukraine. Know that your national staff is doing all it can to lift your voice in the United Nations, the halls of Congress and with the State Department to end this horror. We are connecting with our partners on the ground to provide relief and comfort for those enduring unimaginable suffering. All of our efforts for peace are multiplied by a God whose heart continues to break over human division and sin. May there be peace on earth.

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**Who we are:**

Founded in 1944, the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship is a nation-wide community of over 3200 Presbyterian households who believe that Jesus calls the church to help reduce war, violence and exploitation in the world. We are a non-partisan group, open to all Presbyterians, funded by our members, many of whom have been mission workers across the world, past General Assembly participants and activists on war and peace issues in our churches and communities.

Except for a small staff, we are volunteers whose time and participation in GA is given freely. We do not work for or represent any government or outside lobby group. We see divestment as a tool for peacemaking. And we see climate change as the greatest threat to peace ever. We have divested our Peace Fellowship Endowment Fund at the Presbyterian Foundation of all fossil fuel companies and over 20 companies that profit from or enable the Occupation of Palestine by Israel. To us, this is nonviolence at work, a movement of the spirit.

**Be Bold! Nonviolence Works.**