

## Committee on Justice for Children and Their Families

**Chair:** Josselyn Bennett

**Staff:** Rebecca Davis

**Liaison staff:** Garland F. Pierce

**Program Mission/Purpose:**

To strengthen the religious community's efforts in advocacy for children, to inform and empower church and religious organizations to respond to children's needs, especially those of vulnerable and impoverished children.

**1. What specific actions has the program ministry committee taken or plans to take to follow through with the work on cultural proficiency begun in the January 2005 ELMC meeting?**

The Committee on Justice for Children and their Families (CJCF) meets concurrently with the Committee on Family Ministries and Human Sexuality each year for continuing education and projects of common concern. This year the focus of our continuing education was on growing in our cultural understanding, awareness and aptitude. A portion of our meeting was spent in intentional conversation among participants on how to respect the dignity of each person and live with faithfulness and authenticity in community.

**2. What actions has the program ministry committee taken to strengthen its relations to:**

**a. Other ELMC program ministry committees:** Two of the major goals for the CJCF this year were to host a public witness in Washington, DC in July, with follow-up public witnesses in local communities in September, that will focus on raising awareness about children's needs and will call the church and the nation to greater faithfulness on behalf of children. The second goal was to provide a resource that helps with the interpretation and implementation of the Policy Statement adopted by the NCCC General Assembly last year on children. Both of these projects are being worked on in partnership with the Committee on Family Ministries and Human Sexuality with input from other ELMC program ministries.

**b. NCCC member communions not represented at the table:** The public witness



invited all member communions of the NCC to attend the public witness. Michael Livingston, President of the NCC, preached during the worship service. Rev. Livingston represents a communion that does not ordinarily have representation at the CJCF table.

**c. Other communions and/or agencies?** The key partnership for the Public Witness on July 8<sup>th</sup> was the Children's Defense Fund. The President, Marian Wright Edelman, gave the call to action and various staff members served as workshop leaders and on the planning team. The second phase of the public witness was a series of regional

gatherings. Varieties of partnerships played a vital role and were forged in those local events.

**3. How does the work of your program ministry committee make ELMC a stronger witness to the unity of the church?**

The CJCF is one part of the body of ELMC. We bring the voices of children to the table so that we can all work for greater faithfulness in welcoming children and removing stumbling blocks. We also glean the wisdom of our partner program ministries as a source of strengthening our ministry. We also, on behalf of ELMC, called God's variant voices to a season of prayer and action on July 8<sup>th</sup> in the public witness, A Faithful Voice for Children, which sought to unite the faith community's voice into one on behalf of children.

**4. What work of this program ministry committee was carried forward between meetings of the committee and how was it done?**

With increasing workloads and portfolios of our members and decreasing travel budgets, the CJCF meets twice a year in face to face meetings. This past year we met monthly by conference call as we continued the planning and work that made the Season of Prayer and Action possible in July, September and October. The contract staff for the CJCF coordinates the ongoing ministry and work between meetings and serves as a point person to ensure that projects are carried forward, administrative details are tended to and the committee's vision, mission and goals are integrated and implemented in all our ministries and responsibilities.



**5. What resources/products/services does the program ministry offer to denominations/congregations/the public?**

This year the CJCF developed a study guide for the *Church and Children: Vision and Goals for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* Policy Statement. This resource helps interpret and provides suggestions for living into the policy. It was available at the July 8<sup>th</sup> public witness and was distributed at NCC General Assembly meeting in November. The committee also produced a liturgy for worship and other settings related to the care and advocacy of children. For the mid-term elections season the CJCF produced questions to ask public servants this year concerning their commitment to children. All of these resources are available on the website.

**6. What recommendations do you want to make to the Education and Leadership Ministries Commission? To the NCCC?**

Continue its commitment to children and to examine further ways to live into faithful to the *Church and Children: Vision and Goals for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* Policy Statement.

**Membership:**

Ida Tyree-Hyche  
Curtis Ramsey-Lucas  
Kaye S. Edwards  
Willa Ross  
Anne L. Tuohy  
John Johnson  
Josselyn Bennett  
Martha Bettis Gee  
Brenda D. Tribett  
Amy Crawford  
Carolyn Landers-Pettigrew  
Janice Resseger  
Julie Taylor  
Mary Alice Gran

African Methodist Episcopal Church  
American Baptist Churches in the USA  
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
Christian Methodist Episcopal Church  
The Episcopal Church USA  
Episcopal Office of Government Relations  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Presbyterian Church USA  
Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.  
United Church of Canada  
United Church of Christ  
United Church of Christ  
United Methodist, Women's Division  
United Methodist Church, General Board of Discipleship

Agencies

Matt Rosen  
Gene Roehlkepartain  
Kathy McGinnis  
Tracy Hurd  
Linda Eggbeer

Children's Defense Fund  
Search Institute  
Parenting for Peace and Justice Network  
Unitarian Universalist Association  
Zero to Three

