RESOURCE TOOL
FOLLOWING GOOD SHEPHERD CONGREGATIONAL CHAPTER, 2009

Good Shepherd Position Papers

Trafficking / Migration / Economic Justice / Prostitution / Girl-child / Ecology

“Inspired by the creative audacity of St. Mary Euphrasia, her prophetic and radical response to the needs of her time...”
The priorities for ministry and mission of the 29th Congregational Chapter of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd - to work zealously with women and children, especially those who are trafficked, forced to migrate and oppressed by abject poverty… to support projects for economic justice, and confront unjust systems- follow many decades of GS’s articulation of a strong and clear commitment to Justice:

- The 25th Chapter, 1985 “urged new responses in relation to Social Justice…” and declared that “justice is an integral part of our mission of reconciliation…”
- In 1997 we became explicit about linking our direct services to our work for change in structures of society…and to make use of our internationality, increase our networking, and influence the destructive effects of globalization.
- In 2003 and 2009, we deepened our understanding of how justice expresses our rich spirituality and heritage.

The GSIJP Team offers you a tool, developed with input from GS people across the world and affirmed by the CLT. We hope these papers will be helpful to you in living our directions for mission and ministry.

Any of the 6 position papers can be used as a reference or resource, according to your Unit and regional realities and priorities:

- Chapter implementation
- Setting province priorities
- Formation resource material
- Direction for GS mission and ministry development and evaluation
- Orientation for co-workers and partners in ministry
- Development of local mission and ministry statements, policies and practices
- Advocacy direction
- Social Analysis

“You are called to be so many Good Shepherds” SME

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Good Shepherd Position on the Trafficking of Women and Girls

GS Direction, stated at the 29th Congregational Chapter, July 2009, excerpt:
We commit ourselves... to respond to the anguish of the world calling us to the margins... by taking courageous steps to use our international resources effectively, to network and to... Work zealously with women and children, especially those who are trafficked...

GS position on the phenomena of Human Trafficking, particularly of women and girls

In the late 20th Century and now well into the 21st century, Human Trafficking comprises the fastest growing criminal industry in the world, based on the recruitment, harboring, and transportation of people solely for the purpose of exploitation. It is a debasement of the human person. We understand trafficking as a grotesque injustice rooted in the dynamics of our global world and current global economy. Structures and systems which increase extreme poverty of the vulnerable, support patriarchal hierarchies, and give priority to economic profit above the value of the human person render untold women and children vulnerable to being trafficked for labor and for sexual exploitation. In concert with many forms of gender discrimination and global gender-based violence, the trafficking of women and girls is a violation of their dignity and human rights. It challenges GS’s determination to respond. GS stands with all persons of good will who condemn this phenomena and work to eradicate it.

GS’s first response is to express solidarity with those who have suffered victimization through this horrendous crime. Second, we listen to the experiences of such persons and develop holistic programs to serve their needs. Third, we increase our capacity to understand the dynamics of trafficking so as to support women and girls in healing as well as toward self-empowerment through social supports, personal growth opportunities, and employable skills leading to secure income.

GS, locally, regionally, and internationally, seeks to increase effective advocacy and lobbying for implementation of Human Rights based legislation at national, regional and UN level. We support policies that will prevent and eradicate trafficking in women and girls by addressing gender discrimination, economic injustice, and violence against women. We raise our voice in favor of policies and programs, adequately funded, that ameliorate the chronic socio-economic, political and legal disadvantages of women and girls. We urge States to demonstrate the political will to develop effective tools to protect trafficking victims, prosecute traffickers, and censure the male demand for prostituted sex. (UNDOC NGO statement, 2008)

In all our work, GS seeks to address root causes, examining and unmasking the links between trafficking and policies related economic justice, violence against women, discrimination of the girl child, inadequate migration support, and the social acceptance of the prostitution of women and girls. We encourage participation and leadership in networks and/or campaigns that support an end to trafficking and promote full empowerment of women and girls.
In responding fully to our GS Congregational Direction about Trafficking, it is critical to:

- Ensure anti-trafficking training in our formation, ongoing formation, and the professional development of ourselves, staff, and co-workers. We are committed to awareness of legal and social issues of trafficking (international and local) as well as of effective intervention and advocacy approaches.

- Develop our service capacity to welcome those who have been trafficked into environments and programs that offer a breadth of needed services and genuine opportunities.

- Encourage Prevention, including the promotion of economic justice, local income generation and the support of adequate migration policies.

- Contribute to and lead in policy formation through participation at regional and international conferences, articulating our position, participating in campaigns, and demonstrating leadership.

- Increase awareness of legal tools effective in anti-trafficking and speak in favor of effective local and international anti-trafficking legislation.

- Expand our capacity through responsive program development, participation in local networks, activity in effective advocacy initiatives, and collaboration with the work of the GSIJPO.

- Support the implementation of international Human Rights tools such as:
  - The 2010 United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons;
  - The 2000 Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol) of the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime; and

  - National reporting to CEDAW and the CRC (with Its Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography) is an effective way to amplify GS voice.

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Good Shepherd Position on Economic Justice

GS Direction, stated at the 29th Congregational Chapter, July 2009, excerpt:

We commit ourselves... to respond to the anguish of the world calling us to the margins... by taking courageous steps to use our international resources effectively, to network and to... Work zealously with women and children, especially those... oppressed by abject poverty. We support projects for economic justice, confront unjust systems and take a “corporate stance” when appropriate.

GS position on Economic Justice

The Jubilee Year 2000 followed decades of global neoliberal economic expansion and the concurrent result of an increase of peoples and communities trapped in extreme poverty. Jubilee announced a new millennium with a call for the restoration of justice, for reconciliation among all humanity, for cancellation of all debts, in particular the unjust national debts imposed by wealthy nations on nations unable to bear debt burdens. However, our economic systems and structures have largely denied this call and the 1st decade of this new era has begun with a massive global financial crisis which has reduced millions to inextricable poverty; the gap between rich and poor continues to grow. The disparity between the accumulation of extreme wealth and the inescapability of extreme poverty threatens the dignity of human beings and tends to be repeated in disastrous cycles. Extreme amassment of wealth and refusal to share resources and material goods are both cause and effect of many social and spiritual ills. The effects of poverty on people are insidious: those in conditions of poverty suffer social exclusion together with malnutrition, ill health, unemployment, illiteracy, homelessness, and constant anxiety for the future of their children. Such degradation is a violation of Human Rights, as attested by articles 22, 23, 25 & 26 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Women and children are the ones who bear the heaviest burdens of poverty. They are subject to the desperate victimization of phenomena such as trafficking and the prostitution of women and girls.

GS has a vision that all persons, with special awareness of women and girls, ought to share in the economic, social and spiritual benefits of our global wealth; that food, water, sanitation, shelter, health, education, and social supports be attainable for all. This commitment is based on Judaic-Christian Scripture, Catholic Social Teaching, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the ethical code of the “Golden Rule.” GS stands with all those persons of good will who seek to eradicate poverty and support economic justice. We perceive this as a call to personal and communal conversion, aware of our own wealth and privileges. We also understand that there is a prophetic call to stand against the systems and structures of economic injustice.

GS’s first response to economic justice is to express solidarity with those who are consigned to live in conditions of extreme poverty. Second, we listen to the experiences of these persons, accompany them, develop holistic programs to serve their needs, and support the contributions they make toward alternate policies. Third, we work to increase our capacity to understand the dynamics of global economic exclusion so as to advocate effectively for economic improvement and social transformation.
GS is committed to expand programs and initiatives that bring practical relief from poverty, generate income for women, and support grassroots actions that empower communities and individuals. GS continues to develop skills training, personal growth projects, micro-enterprise projects, micro-credit schemes, local co-operatives, international marketing of goods, and a variety of such projects as a means to join with women and their families who struggle, within the global economic structures, to find a way out of poverty. GS projects offer many forms of social support and personal empowerment opportunities. Along with fulfilling the works of mercy by service to those in conditions of poverty, the eradication of poverty is also a moral and ethical responsibility of all. It is imperative to be active in effective advocacy and lobbying strategies to address poverty and to change dominant structures and systems that threaten future generations with the same vulnerabilities.

In responding fully to our GS Congregational Direction on Economic Justice, it is critical to:

- Develop sustainable strategies for economic development in local communities, in order to ensure that income generation is direct, practical, and effective for women and families. This will include a diversity of models, responsive to local situations.

- Engage in supporting literacy education, employment skills training, and business and finance education for women.

- Support principles of Fair Trade, as essential to ecological sustainability and inclusion.

- Increase our own “consumer awareness” and link purchasing with production and labor rights. Evaluate our complicity with unjust structures.

- Create and/or Participate in networks and campaigns that call for Economic Justice and inclusion for all.


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Good Shepherd Position on Migration

GS Direction, stated at the 29th Congregational Chapter, July 2009, excerpt

We commit ourselves... to respond to the anguish of the world calling us to the margins... by taking courageous steps to use our international resources effectively, to network and to... Work zealously with women and children, especially those... who are... forced to migrate

GS position on Migration

In a globalized world, people cross borders, temporarily or permanently, for many reasons. Where populations are mired in conditions of poverty, where environmental conditions are not sustainable, or where conflict immerses civilian population in constant violence or virtual dictatorship, people move for both freedom and survival, seeking better social and economic opportunities. A migrant is one engaged in activity for payment in a State of which he or she is not a national. Movement across borders is a perilous journey for those who must separate from families, who cannot acquire legal documents, have documents taken from them, cannot communicate in a new language, or lack education and employment skills. Migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons are often categorized or labeled, making the regularization of their situation bureaucratically impossible. Their situation leaves them vulnerable to being exploited by traffickers and smugglers, even by legally recognized recruiters. Women are increasingly among the vulnerable populations of people migrating. Where the male head of household migrates, the women and children left behind are often bereft of any protection or income.

GS is part of a Judea-Christian tradition whose spiritual covenant rests on a commitment to “welcome the stranger.” The Social Teaching of our church has a rich heritage of welcome and concern for immigrants, migrants, and refugees. We embrace this tradition and support Human Rights for all immigrants, migrants, and refugees.

There exist barriers to the free movements of peoples that contradict human rights. There is an apprehension of “mass migration” resulting in many restrictive laws. The right of the free movement of the human person has been subordinated to national sovereignty and the dominant rights of the movement of goods and money in this globalized era. While conventions and treaties exist, implementation lags to the disadvantage of those who are most vulnerable in their home society, desperate to seek personal and family security.

GS’s first response to migrants and refugees is to welcome them as one would welcome the Divine among us. We honor the culture and heritage they bring, help them in resettlement or regularization, and celebrate the positive contributions migrants make to the economic, social and cultural lives of a new locality.

The service needs of migrants are complex and extensive – from language skills to health care to social supports, to healing from trauma, to need for employment skills to legal help. We seek to
listen to their experiences, accompany them, and develop programs to serve their multiple and varied needs.

We continually update migration issues – patterns, legal requirements, and status so as to advocate for change in systems and structures. We work so that the most vulnerable migrant will receive protection, welcome, and opportunity that every human person ought to be accorded.

In responding fully to our GS Congregational Direction about Migration, it is critical to:

Develop service projects and participate in networks that extend social services, offer citizenship classes, secure improved housing, attend to decent wages, supply medical attention, and have educational opportunities for immigrants, migrants, and refugees. Attention is given to the families of migrants and refugees, with efforts to sustain relationships.

Give support to organizations of migrants that speak on their own behalf and define and advocate for the best solutions and policies.

Advocate, nationally and internationally, for policies that respect the human rights of immigrants and preserve the unity of the immigrant family, including due process rights, fair naturalization procedures, and legalization opportunities. We advocate for generous refugee policies that provide protection for those fleeing oppression and discrimination.

Oppose efforts to restrict migration while failing to address root causes and the continuation of political, social, and economic inequities that contribute to the desperate movement of peoples. Advocacy for sustainable local economies, against the neo-liberal economic project is a vital aspect of this.

Advocate for economic and legal protection of migrants while they are working in host country labor markets, including standards on wages and working condition. This requires policy cooperation and economic justice between the sending country and host country.

Know and support the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to status of refugees (and its protocols.) Support full ratification of the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families as well as ILO C-97 and ILO C-143. Including migrant issues of women in national CEDAW reports is an effective way to advocate.

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Good Shepherd Position on the Prostitution of Women and Girls

GS Direction, stated at the 29th Congregational Chapter, July 2009 (Excerpt)

We commit ourselves... to respond to the anguish of the world calling us to the margins... by taking courageous steps to use our international resources effectively, to network and to... Work zealously with women and children, especially those who are trafficked...

The prostitution of women and girls is a chronic form of gender violence that has been structurally embedded in societies over the centuries. Good Shepherd’s position echoes the UN 1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others “that prostitution is incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person, and endangers the welfare of the individual, the family and the community...” Prostitution is, by its nature, exploitative and is never part of a global decent work agenda.

The system of prostitution of women and girls is based in socio-cultural perceptions and attitudes about the relationships between men and women. It is rooted in economic systems, now structured in a globalized economy that has seen rapid growth of women in extreme poverty; it is supported by political structures and systems that devalue and exclude women and do not evaluate gender outcomes. (GS NGO statement to CSW of the UN, 2005)

The root causes of prostitution are tied to poverty, patriarchy, male privilege, extreme wealth, racist attitudes, militarization, and the demand by men for women to be available for sexual purchase. The rapid expansion of trafficking as a global criminal industry has increased the demand for girls and women to be used as objects in prostitution. Good Shepherd, committed to work to eradicate trafficking, seeks to analyze root causes and systemic links to the phenomena of trafficking.

Good Shepherd’s first response is to express solidarity with those who are vulnerable to being the objects of prostitution. We seek to listen to the experiences of these persons, develop holistic programs to serve their needs, and accompany them in their personal journeys. We support women and girls in healing, self-sufficiency through employable skills, economic opportunities, personal growth opportunities, reconciliation with often estranged families, and we seek to be active in processes of social change.

Good Shepherd, locally and internationally, seeks to increase effective advocacy for governmental and UN policies, programs, and legislation, based in human rights, that will end the prostitution of women by addressing gender discrimination, violence against women, and the dynamics of the demand for the prostitution of women. We urge governments to exhibit the political will to develop effective tools to educate and empower women and to ensure the substantive equality of women, as called for by the UN CEDAW. Good Shepherd stands with all those persons of good will who condemn the prostitution of the human person and who work to eradicate discrimination against women.
In responding fully to our Good Shepherd Congregational Position on Prostitution, it is critical to:

- Identify that the prostitution of women and girls is a form of gender violence, unmasking the lie that it can be dignified as a profession or an acceptable form of work.

- Develop programs, with the participation of those who have been prostituted, that provide holistic social support and empowerment, skills training, and education about human rights. Working for economic empowerment is a foundational approach.

- Call for the prosecution of those who purchase sexual acts from women and girls; condemn state sponsorship of this form of violence by rejecting the legalization of prostitution; and work for policies and practices that do not criminalize nor punish women and girls who are prostituted.

- Contribute to policy formation through participation at regional and international conferences, articulating our position, participating in campaigns, and demonstrating leadership in calling for the exposition of prostitution as a form of gender violence.

- Expand the capacity for service and advocacy through use of effective networks and initiatives, in cooperation with the NGO work of the GSJPO.


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Good Shepherd Position on the Girl Child

With a history of service extending back to the 1600’s in Europe, Good Shepherd has always been attentive to the social vulnerability of women and girls. Over time, Good Shepherd has extended its work to over 70 countries and has adopted programs and methodologies consistent with the best professional practices of each era and particular culture in responding to the needs of girls.

Today, in all cultures, girls continue to experience exclusion as a result of social and systemic injustice, discrimination, gender violence, violations of human rights, and, especially, gender inequality. Girls are born with the inherent and inalienable rights of all human beings; they are born with the unique rights of childhood which can enable them to reach their full potential as individuals and members of society. Sadly, for many girls, fundamental rights are denied and violated from birth. Across the globe, low value placed on the girl child subjects her to exclusion, exploitation and violence, genital mutilation (FGM), and even infanticide. Lack of access to education and adequate health care, sexual abuse, female genital cutting, and too early child bearing are some obstacles that impede full development and deprive millions of girls of childhood; they are denied the opportunity to grow into productive and equal members in their societies. HIV/AIDS disproportionately affects girls with increasingly destructive effects. In situations of armed conflict girls are recruited for combat and are frequent and deliberate targets of systematic rape, abduction and murder. Even in some refugee camps where they have sought protection, girls are often exploited. Across the world it is not uncommon that girls are vulnerable to suicidal thoughts. And girl children are among the most adversely affected when their families and nations are immersed in poverty.

Good Shepherd’s first response to the girl child is to accept and cherish her, affirm her immeasurable value as a human person. Good Shepherd develops social service programs to enhance the girl-child: we promote safety and protection for the girl child both within her home and within social institutions such as schools; we support universal education for the girl child, knowing it to be the most effective avenue for an individual child to realize her capacity to grow while being the surest path out of cyclical poverty and positive transformation for a family and society. We develop enrichment programs for self-esteem, pride in culture, and expression of her fullest self; we support children by supporting social benefits for parents and all forms of extended families that care for children. Good Shepherd advocates and lobbies for the above principles.
In responding fully to the needs of the girl child it is critical to:

Develop supportive social programs that welcome and value each girl, respecting her human and child rights. Good Shepherd programs are characterized by girls’ participation in defining needs and shaping responses; are based in the home community of the child as far as possible; are inclusive of and responsive to family support; are rich with social supports and social interaction, including, foremost, educational opportunities.

Develop specialized gender sensitive responses appropriate to children who have suffered trauma related to abuse, trafficking, use as objects in prostitution, armed conflict, loss of parent(s), etc. Such programs will provide gender-sensitive, community-based reintegration, sensitive to each child’s readiness. Each girl will participate in defining her goals.

Include families, boys and men in program efforts that ensure the human rights of all, including the girl child. The United Nations Children’s Fund, UNICEF, can be an appropriate resource to draw from and possible partnership to develop locally.

Participate in networks and campaigns of Child Rights’ advocates to ensure political visibility and voice for all children, especially the girl child; support public outreach activities that ensure the presence of and inclusion of the voice of the girl child. Empowerment and education about human rights for girls is an essential strategy.

Build capacity to know and use gender sensitive research toward “best practices” in child welfare, appropriate to local context and culture.

Support development of gender-responsive budgeting in the political sphere that explicitly allocates monies for: girls’ education and training as well as physical and mental health. Support development of programs seeking to end violence against girls, including genital cutting, incest, prenatal sex selection, infanticide, and trafficking for labor and sexual exploitation.

Support the strategic objectives of Section L of the Beijing Platform for Action (UN, 1995); educate girls and communities according to the principles of Section L on the girl-child.

Urge countries to sign, ratify and implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols. Make national reports to the UN Child Rights Committee. Include the girl child in national reports for CEDAW. Work for national legislation that incorporates the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

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Good Shepherd Position on Ecology

Reconciliation is the heart of Good Shepherd mission. In the 3rd millennium, we are part of “a growing awareness that world peace is threatened not only by continued injustices among peoples and nations, but also by a lack of due respect for nature.” (Pope John Paul II) Such dissonance with the very air we breathe and the water we drink calls for a new response of reconciliation with creation, with our very universe - held so sacred by all religious traditions. We cannot ignore that the “dominant patterns of production and consumption are causing environmental devastation, the depletion of resources, and a massive extinction of species.” We see injustice when “communities are being undermined and the benefits of development are not shared equitably.” We know that “injustice, poverty, ignorance, and violent conflict are widespread and the cause of great suffering. We recognize that “we stand at a critical moment in Earth’s history, a time when humanity must choose its future…” Our mission of reconciliation calls us to “join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice and a culture of peace.” (Quotes excerpted from the Earth Charter, 2000)

Good Shepherd understands that reconciliation with our earth is reconciliation with ourselves and with our Creator, calling for a new consciousness, a new identity, centered on the kinship of all creation and the implementation of Human Rights for all. Such identity requires a shift from a history of hierarchical exploitation to an ethic of right relationship that seeks reconciliation among all living creatures, with future generations in mind. We are called to change from a focus on material goods to holistic well-being; from excess to sufficiency; from exclusion to inclusion; from competition to cooperation; from pursuing privilege to serving the common good; from the pre-eminence of humanity to the reverence for all life. (A Call to Integrate Faith, Ecology and the Global Economy) Such reconciliation is a call to Justice. We feel keenly the reality that those with the fewest natural, environmental, and economic resources are those most harmed by environmental destruction. Those most vulnerable are women and children - the majority of the world’s poor. Likewise, indigenous communities suffer and are threatened by environmental destruction. We seek to view our cosmos anew, with a vision of justice.

We acknowledge that implementation of such a vision is complex, implicating, especially for wealthy industrialized economies, our very habits of daily life and consumption in an economic system we often take for granted. It calls us to transform our very image of our place in the universes from a human-centric perspective to position ourselves in a “unique place that is not at the center.” (From Towards Transformation: A Study on Community Life for our Contemplative Communities, Good Shepherd) Some of our long-held beliefs and habits of culture are challenged by this new vision. Such a vision calls us to surrender long-held and assumed positions of power in favor of shared power and
decision making. It calls for a critique of our approaches to production and consumption – individually, in local communities, and in our societies.

In responding fully to our Good Shepherd Congregational Position on Ecology, it is critical to:

Recognize a call to transformation grounded in spirituality and alive in active mission.

Continue to update our theology and prayer in relation to newer understandings of earth science, new insights about cosmology, and knowledge of universal Human Rights. We recognize that the interdependence of all expands the reality of human rights to include rights of all – non-human, living and non-living.

Integrate linkages between our prayer and theology and the rights of women and children, especially those in conditions of poverty.

Evaluate and adjust our personal daily life style and our communal life style decisions – consumption, production, use of natural resources – in light of the kinship and sustainability of the universe. Consider positive options such as fair trade purchasing, avoidance of non-renewable disposable products, choice of food options that support local agriculture and low energy production.

Evaluate our service projects and programs from the principles of respect for the earth, compassionate care for the community, and reverence for the sustainability of present and future generations.

Be politically active in issues such as free trade, climate change, practices of trans-national corporations that diminish human rights, and national energy policies. Analyze and confront economic policies that lead to human and earth degradation. Any investments we hold require such analysis.

Include analysis, in all advocacy efforts and political action, of the effect of environmental degradation on women and those who live in poverty, including indigenous populations.

Study, pray over, support, and promulgate the Earth Charter, with its principles of the importance of spirituality in human life, environmental protection, human rights, equitable human development, and the promotion of peace.

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