

Report to the Fellowship Council from the Social Concerns Committee

January, 2007

Background:

The Social Concerns Committee was created by and is funded by the National Conference of the FGBC. It was originally authorized by National Conference in 1980 as the “Sanctity of Life Committee.” In 1985 the committee assignment was expanded and the committee was renamed so that the committee could address additional issues where biblical and church teaching intersect with societal and governmental issues.

Philosophy (the following is not intended to be a comprehensive or official statement)

To do “Social Concerns” is to be activist in our world while also being realistic: we will not “millennialize” our world. God will fully establish his kingdom. Evil will mark our present age. At the same time, we have the prophetic call to seek justice and mercy. We acknowledge human government as God’s tool to encourage good and punish evil. The church must prudently and carefully speak God’s values into our society and model them in our own ministries. Our expectation is not for social transformation but for measured successes. Our call is to be faithful and flexible, wise as serpents but harmless as doves. “Social Concerns” calls the church to a full-orbed understanding of what it means to “share the Gospel” and its full moral and societal themes. Our effort should include uphold the value of religious liberty and opposing religious persecution everywhere.

Current status and work:

The committee has eight members with deep interest in proper Christian engagement with social issues. Our main difficulty is connecting for an annual meeting since some, if not most, are not at the Conference in the summer.

The major work of this committee in the past year has been as follows:

1. Communicating regularly throughout the Fellowship. Last year a change was made in communication with the Fellowship. Rather than sending out periodic “Social Concerns Communicators” to our churches by electronic mail or regular mail through the main FGBC office, more frequent communications are made. These are featured in the electronic “FGBC Newsletter” and inquirers are connected to a blog. This makes possible more frequent and more timely communications and ends the large amount of work required for quarterly mailings.
2. Operating a table at National Conference.
3. Being available as resource persons to churches and individuals throughout the year. This is one of the most important tasks the committee and its chairman can have.
4. Being available during the time of National Conference.
5. Developing resolutions for consideration at National Conference. This is very important.
6. Distributing these resolutions to the FGBC family through electronic mail.

Continuing needs for more effective ministry:

For social concerns activity in general and for the work of the Social Concerns Committee in particular to have greater impact in the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches, the following action items should be considered:

1. Show commitment to Social Concerns ministry and provide guidance to this committee at the highest levels of leadership in our Fellowship.
2. Communicate stories of what churches have done in their localities—ministries that “do justice” or “show mercy.” This creates a “maybe we can do it too” thinking.
3. Create Social Concerns goals the same way other strategic goals are developed.
4. Be sure that a Social Concerns ministry is clearly set forth in our purpose statement and objectives.
5. Increase the visibility of Social Concerns at National Conference and “Focus” retreats and in communications.
6. Specify the role, nature and process of “Resolutions” in the Manual of Procedure.
7. Encourage the development of Social Concerns ministries in the Fellowship and in our local churches. This includes relevant teaching on Christian social ethics.
8. Make “police chaplaincy” a strong and active aspect of our “chaplaincy” ministry and give it some prominence at the times of the annual Conference. I have found that many of our pastors are now chaplains, as I am. This kind of active ministry should be encouraged and nurtured.

Respectfully submitted,

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Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches