

**PROPOSED OVERTURE TO THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA) - 225TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

June, 2022

Recommendation

The Presbytery of the Western Reserve overtures the 225th General Assembly (2022) to:

- commend the Stated Clerk's "Call to Prayer for the people of Ethiopia" (November 10, 2021) to the attention of our congregations, presbyteries, and synods; and
- encourage their engagement in self-directed study, prayer, and action related to the origins of the conflict, ongoing acute suffering, and prospects for peace in the Horn of Africa.

Rationale

Ethiopia is the second largest country in sub-Saharan Africa, with a population of 117 million comprised of more than 80 distinct ethnic groups, and one with which we have multiple connections:

- The Presbyterian Church (USA) has been in relationship with Ethiopian Christians for over a century through Gospel ministry, theological training, and founding of hospitals and schools. The 8 million-member Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus traces its origins to this work.
- The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, a World Council member, dates to the 4th C. A.D.
- An estimated quarter-million Ethiopian immigrants and their children reside in the U.S.
- Our government has been the largest source of bilateral foreign assistance to Ethiopia.

Since November, 2019, Ethiopia's central government, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), and other forces have been engaged in armed conflict over a wide area of Ethiopia. This civil war has:

- Caused tens of thousands of deaths
- Displaced hundreds of thousands due to ethnic cleansing and other violence
- Brought millions more to the brink of starvation and famine, per the United Nations WFP
- Left widespread destruction of crops and civilian infrastructure such as hospitals and schools
- Victimized women and girls through sexual violence
- Led to massacres of Christian pilgrims and worshipers and looting of cultural treasures

Although one of the worst conflicts in the world today, its existence and severity are little known to most Americans. Without access by Western media, ongoing suffering is happening largely out of public view.

The United Nations World Food Programme and other relief agencies need unhindered ability to deliver food and medical aid to people in all areas in Tigray, Amhara, and Afar regions affected by the fighting. But despite international calls for a cease-fire and prompt rendering of assistance to civilian war victims, hostilities continue, and the humanitarian disaster shows every sign of growing more severe.

These factors give us a particular responsibility and opportunity now to engage in study, prayer, and action – as suggested by the Stated Clerk – regarding the present conflict and prospects for peace.

Sources of information for study and prayer (Ctrl + Click to follow links)

"Call to Prayer for the people of Ethiopia" (November 10, 2021)

<https://pcusa.org/news/2021/11/10/stated-clerk-issues-call-prayer-people-ethiopia/>

"Presbyterian Mission - Ethiopia" (as of February 16, 2022)

www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/global/ethiopia

"Severe Hunger Tightens Grip on Northern Ethiopia", Saving Lives Changing Lives, United Nations World Food Programme (January 28, 2022)

<https://www.wfp.org/news/severe-hunger-tightens-grip-northern-ethiopia>