

The 220th General Assembly (2012) of the Presbyterian Church-USA approved the following recommendations, calling for an end to corporal punishment by parents and caretakers in homes, schools, and child-care facilities:

1. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) encourages its members to adopt discipline methods that do not include corporal punishment of children, and Recommendation 2
2. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) calls upon all states to enact laws prohibiting corporal punishment in schools and day and residential child-care facilities.
3. Direct the appropriate General Assembly committees to provide limited bibliography of resources presenting alternative effective methods of discipline to corporal punishment.]
4. That the following supporting documentation be posted online, hosted by the Child Advocacy or other appropriate office of the General Assembly Mission Council (GAMC):

Selected Bibliographic documentation:

Berlin, Lisa J., Patrick S. Malone, Catherine Ayoub, Jean M. Ispa, Mark A. Fine, Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, Christy Brady-Smith & Yu Bai. (2009). Correlates and Consequences of Spanking and Verbal Punishment for Low-Income White, African American, and Mexican American Toddlers. *Child Development*, 80, 1403–20.

Ellison, Christopher G. & Darren E. Sherkat. (1993). Conservative Protestantism and Support for Corporal Punishment. *American Sociological Review*, 58, 131–44.

Gregory, James F. (1995). The Crime of Punishment: Racial and Gender Disparities in the Use of Corporal Punishment in U.S. Public Schools. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 64, 454-62.

Gregory, Robert. (1991). Is Corporal Punishment Degrading? *The North American Review*, 153, 693–703.

Grogan-Kaylor, Andrew & Melanie D. Otis. (2007). The Predictors of Parental Use of Corporal Punishment. *Family Relations*, 56, 80–91.

James P. Jewett. (1952). The Fight against Corporal Punishment in American Schools. *History of Education Journal*, 4, 1–10.

Rodriguez, Christina M. (2003). Parental Discipline and Abuse Potential Affects on Child Depression, Anxiety, and Attributions. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 65, 809–17.

Simons, Ronald L., Kuei-Hsiu Lin, Leslie C. Gordon, Gene H. Brody, & Rand D. Conger. (2002). Community Differences in the Association between Parenting Practices and Child Conduct Problems. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 64, 331–45.

Turner, Heather & David Finkelhor. (1996). Corporal Punishment as a Stressor among Youth. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 58, 155–66.

Vandenbosch, Sue. (1991). Political Culture and Corporal Punishment in Public Schools. *Publius*, 21, 117–21.

Walsh, Wendy. (2002). Spankers and Nonspankers: Where They Get Information on Spanking. *Family Relations*, 51, 81–88.

RATIONALE

Rationale for Rec. 1

Corporal punishment models aggressive behavior as a solution to conflict. Numerous research studies have associated corporal punishment with increased aggression in children and adults, increased substance abuse, increased risk of crime and violence, low self-esteem, and chronic depression. It is difficult to imagine Jesus of Nazareth condoning any action that is intended to hurt children physically or psychologically. Time outs and deprivation of privileges are as effective as corporal punishment in stopping undesirable behavior. The effectiveness of corporal punishment decreases with subsequent use and therefore leads caretakers to hit children more severely. Children must eventually develop their own conscience and self-discipline, which are fostered by a home environment of love, respect, and trust.

Rationale for rec. 2

Schools and child-care facilities are the only institutions in America in which striking another person for the purpose of causing physical pain is legal. Corporal punishment is humiliating and degrading to children and sometimes causes physical injury. It is difficult to imagine Jesus of Nazareth condoning any action that is intended to hurt children physically or psychologically. Corporal punishment sends a message that hitting smaller and weaker people is acceptable. Corporal punishment is used most often on poor children, minorities, children with disabilities, and boys. There are effective alternatives to corporal punishment that teach children to be self-disciplined rather than to submit out of fear. Schools and child-care centers should inspire children to enjoy learning and school and child-care personnel should be able to encourage positive behavior without hitting children.

Rationale Overall

The 218th General Assembly (2008) of the PC(USA) approved the *Social Creed for the 21st Century*. It states “we honor the dignity of every person” (*Minutes*, 2008, Part I, p. 924) and calls on church members to work for the full rights of all people.

The *Social Creed*, while focusing on a broad array of social injustices, nevertheless affirms the fact that we are all created in the divine image and because of this alone, we are individuals of worth. It concludes, “we ...commit ourselves to a culture of peace and freedom that embraces non-violence, nurtures character. ...” (*Minutes*, 2008, Part I, p. 925).

Consistent with the goals and statements in the Social Creed, the recommendations calling for an end to the practice of corporal punishment likewise:

- Asserts the basic dignity of every human being as created in the image of God, including and especially those most vulnerable, the world’s children.
- Decries and rejects the use of any form of physical violence, for whatever reason, toward children and adolescents.
- Affirms the principle of seeking nonviolent solutions to human problems, be they interpersonal, behavioral, or social.
- Acknowledges the social sin of our participation in a system that not only condones, but encourages such violence toward children and that legally protects

adults who choose to spank, slap, or hit their own children or the children of others.

- Declares the use of corporal punishment (CP) on children (e.g., spanking, slapping, hitting), both in the schools and homes, as outdated and ineffective, as evidenced by decades of psychological research.

The impetus for this resolution is driven by the spirit of compassion that is our gift from the Creator. It is also driven by the desire to change a sinful system that condones different standards of behavior based solely upon the age of the victim of physical hitting, slapping, or spanking. Further, to note:

- Corporal punishment was once common in prisons and the military—but it is now banned. It is also now outlawed in most daycare centers and foster-parent homes.

- There is a large body of research that indicates spanking is, in fact, associated with a number of negative, unintended consequences on children (e.g., increased aggression, depression, and anxiety) and adults (mental health problems, partner violence, and child abuse).

- The practice does not promote close, loving family relationships.

- Corporal punishment in homes and schools contributes to the intergenerational transmission of violence in our society.

- Let us join The United Methodist Church in voicing our objection to this practice. They passed two resolutions against the practice in 2004.

Ending corporal punishment of children in our world is not only the sensible and humane thing to do, it is the faithful thing to do.