

Statement of Progressive Christians Uniting: California's Proposition 36

Progressive Christians Uniting (PCU) is a California-based network of individuals and congregations committed to putting progressive faith into action. PCU has approximately 6,000 participating supporters and has been expanding rapidly in recent years by forming staffed, semi-autonomous chapters throughout Southern California and (increasingly) in the Central Coast and Bay Area as well.

For the past five years PCU has strongly supported Proposition 36. We have prepared educational materials and trainings on Prop 36 for people of faith, we have lobbied directly for full funding of the program, and we have pressed for effective implementation at the county level. Our commitment to this program grows out of our deepest conviction that the punishment model for addictive behavior is the wrong model: that people suffering addictions are capable of leading productive, crime-free lives through a supportive regime of treatment and social support, whereas these same people's lives are almost always wasted for no reason when we jail them for nonviolent drug-related offenses.

Many of our organization's leaders are clergy who understand from firsthand exposure how addictive behavior, low self-esteem, family dysfunction, and low social skills often combine to blight individual lives. These same pastors have also witnessed the remarkable turnarounds that can and do occur under the kinds of treatment/recovery regimes that are made possible by Prop 36.

Our other moral reason for supporting Prop 36 arises from our growing dismay over California's out-of-control prison-industrial complex: a prison system that consumes far too many public resources and that fails miserably on every measure of what would actually constitute humane, rehabilitative detention. Our prisons are *not* making law-abiding citizens any safer in either the short run or the long run. Adding still more people with treatable addictions to the ranks of the incarcerated makes no moral, fiscal, or practical sense.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Peter Laarman, Executive Director, Progressive Christians Uniting
316 W. Second Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012 – 213/625-0149