

FAMILIES VALUED



Newsletter

Dear friends,

After years as a Resident Fellow and, now, Senior Advisor to the Families Valued program, I have wrapped up my time with the Center for Public Justice. It's difficult to express my full gratitude to the CPJ community for the opportunity to learn and work together. After years as a Resident Fellow and, now, Senior Advisor to the Families Valued program,



I'd like to make an attempt, first, by giving thanks for the good work of CPJ. The Center roots itself in a Christian theology that recognizes God's good intentions for the world and for the diversity knit into creation. James Skillen, the first Executive Director of the Center for Public Justice, put it this way: "Humans give shape to and live through a variety of kinds of structured relationships, organizations, and institutions." This sounds a bit formal, but what it tells us is that God did not design creation as a monoculture, but as a world with varied patterns of living, all intended to contribute to a harmonious whole.

CPJ's tradition stands in contrast to the contemporary habit of collapsing our world into a singular image or ideology. Whether it's the market, the battlefield, or the boardroom, or the political left versus the political right, we're tempted to characterize the world through just one lens and to view those who don't do so as opponents. But if we believe God designed all kinds of modes of living, we need to pause this kind of collapsing thought and ask: is there room for all that God had in mind? How do we make space for the multiple facets of the image of God in people?

The question we've been asking since the beginning of the Families Valued program has been: is there space for family life?

From the day I approached Stephanie with the idea of Families Valued, CPJ has honored family as a good gift from God - in keeping with its long-standing [theological discernment about family](#). Members and friends of the Families Valued team carried that understanding into action. Chelsea Maxwell, the first program associate, and consulting writers like Katelyn Beaty and Amy Zietlow gathered first-hand stories about [the stressors](#) and [transitions in family life](#). Researchers Denise Daniels, Laura Luchies, and Rachel Venema, and others helped us understand family-supportive institutions through a faith-lens. Michelle Kirtley, Chelsea Bombino, Stanley Carlson-Thies served as encouraging and wise thought partners. Scholars, pastors, and Christian leaders shared physical and virtual space to reach common ground on topics such as paid family leave. Because of this work, CPJ and other faith-based organizations have deepened their vision and public advocacy for

family-supportive policies and helped win important changes in the law such as the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, enacted in 2022.

There is more work ahead. In a season of dramatic political change, we'll need to keep human dignity and the integrity of the family bond close to our hearts. I'm grateful that Stephanie Summers' leadership has made CPJ a place where all sorts of folks from college students to pastors can come to grow as citizens - truly vital work for this moment. Madi Allen, transitioning into the role of Director of Family and Caregiving Policy, will bring her deep passion for family and maternal health to CPJ's work for just, pro-family policy.

Going forward, I'll be focused on a variety of projects bridging faith and civic leaders for the common good as the Principal of Hope& Consulting. I'd love to remain connected in that work (you can find me at hopeand.us and rachel@hopeand.us) as well as a friend of CPJ.

In Peace and Hope,



Rachel Anderson

Protecting our Safety Nets: Share Your Story

Over the last week, many of us have experienced panic, confusion, and frustration as executive orders were made with unclear implications for the funding of essential federal programs supporting families, like SNAP and Medicaid.

That order has now been rescinded, but we are reminded of the importance of protecting our social safety nets. Families Valued will be lifting up stories of how these safety nets have helped working families in America.

If you have a story of how access to Medicaid, SNAP, or the Child Tax Credit impacted your family, would you share it with us?

[Share Your Story](#)

Want to learn more about the Child Tax Credit?

Check out this article by CPJ intern alumna Joya Schreurs: [Congress Must Save the Child Tax Credit: What You Need to Know and Why You Should Care.](#)

From Our Reading List

This month, we're sharing a blog entry by Elissa Yukiko Weichbrodt, titled *Learning from Degas's Awkward Dancers*. In this post, Weichbrodt explores how Edgar Degas's painting *The Dance Lesson* captures the labor behind beauty and the often awkward, repetitive work that leads to transformation, drawing parallels to our own challenges and efforts.



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