

**CHRISTIAN FAITH:
ECONOMIC LIFE AND JUSTICE**

**A PRONOUNCEMENT
from
the Seventeenth General Synod
of the United Church of Christ**

**Office for Church in Society
United Church of Christ
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GENERAL SYNOD 17: A PRONOUNCEMENT ON CHRISTIAN FAITH: ECONOMIC LIFE AND JUSTICE

I. SUMMARY

This pronouncement is an affirmation by the United Church of Christ that the struggle to achieve economic justice for all of God's people is an imperative of the Christian faith. It is also a confession that we have done too little to correct the economic injustices of our nation and the world. Finally, it is a statement of our commitment to transform the structures of church and society by working for economic justice.

II. BACKGROUND

There is a sickness in the soul that infects both the poor and the affluent in our nation and the world as a result of economic injustice. Among the poor are those who have internalized economic powerlessness and poverty, losing a sense of meaning and worth to their lives. Among the affluent are those who have been captured by the false values and priorities of materialism and who have also lost a sense of the meaning and purpose of life. An unjust economy generates dissatisfaction for both those with too much and those with too little.

For Christians, economic justice is a faith issue, "for the Lord is a God of justice" (Is. 30:18). Scripture discloses a God whose love and compassion for creation have no limits, a God "who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry" (Ps. 146:7), a God who in Jesus Christ came "that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (Jn. 10:10). Moreover, there is pervasive poverty and suffering in the midst of those economic systems which are capable of organizing the gifts of creation so that all members of the human household could have the means of life. In such a situation, commitment to economic justice becomes a profound human responsibility. In the parable of the great judgment, Jesus reminds individuals and nations that in failing to provide food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, welcome to the stranger, clothing to the naked and care to the infirmed and imprisoned "as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me" (Mt. 25:45).

This pronouncement attempts to portray the experiences and perspectives of both those victimized by present economic systems as well as those who benefit from those systems. It is motivated by the cries of anguish of our sisters and brothers in our nation and the world. Remembering God's special

concern for the poor and suffering, the pronouncement seeks to understand why current economic systems fail to provide an adequate means of life for two-thirds of the members of the human community.

The pronouncement on Christian Faith: Economic Life and Justice builds on the pronouncement affirming the United Church of Christ as a Just Peace Church voted by the Fifteenth General Synod. It presents the call to economic justice as a complement to the focus on peace in that earlier pronouncement.

The pronouncement is the outgrowth of a long process of study and reflection. In 1980, a group of United Church of Christ theologians and economists made a covenant together "to join the search for new economic theories and strategies more faithful to the Gospel." The Fourteenth General Synod requested the preparation of a pronouncement containing an analysis of the global economic crisis from a Christian perspective, an articulation of a public theology of economics and an appropriate response by the United Church of Christ.

This pronouncement is the synthesis of two documents: the proposed pronouncement on Christian Faith and Economic Life and the proposed pronouncement on Christian Faith and Economic Justice, both of which have been submitted to the Seventeenth General Synod. The proposed pronouncement on Christian Faith and Economic Life was informed by feedback to the study paper, Christian Faith and Economic Life, provided by a diverse group of United Church of Christ members. The racial and ethnic members of the United Church of Christ believed that the relationship between racism and economic injustice needed further articulation; this was provided in the proposed pronouncement on Christian Faith and Economic Justice.

This pronouncement recognizes that the majority of people in the world suffer in one way or another under the present global economic order, irrespective of their particular economic system. As North American Christians in the United Church of Christ, we must boldly confess the inequity and injustice in the economic system of the United States, at the same time that we admit our involvement with injustices in the global economy. This confession requires both naming the structural problems inherent in our economic system and confronting the effects of racism, sexism, materialism and militarism. The

church cannot be truly prophetic without honest confession.

As we struggle to understand the demands of justice that God places on our economic lives, we acknowledge that we, in the United Church of Christ, come from many different economic backgrounds. Our personal histories affect how we hear the Word, particularly when economic issues are at stake. Thus, rich and poor in our church respond very differently to the news that the hungry were fed and the rich sent away empty (Lk. 1:53). Some who are poor among us hear this word and cry out for immediate change. Some who are affluent among us let the fear of loss keep us from fully hearing the judging and transforming message. Those who are comfortable often focus on the benefits of the current economic system and hope that charity and economic growth will ameliorate suffering and poverty. But those whose children go to bed hungry at night, those who have no home or means of income cannot wait.

This pronouncement is being offered by the United Church Board for World Ministries, the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, the Commission for Racial Justice, the Office for Church in Society and the Council for Racial and Ethnic Ministries.

III. BIBLICAL, ETHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE

The word "economy" comes from two Greek words meaning "household," and "law" or "management." (The compounded Greek word is often translated "stewardship.") Economy therefore is the ordering or management of the household. For Christians, economics involves the management of the human household in a manner consistent with God's intentions as revealed in scripture. Many of the biblical traditions depict God's desire for a just household in which all persons, particularly the poor and vulnerable, have access to resources sufficient for survival, freedom, dignity and community participation.

The formative event of biblical faith is the Exodus, God's liberation of slaves from the oppressive household or economy of Pharaoh. God disrupts the productive but deadly economy of Pharaoh because some of its slaves cry out to God under their burdens. After delivering the people of Israel, God establishes a covenanted household of justice in the land of promise. The first five books of the Old Testament describe a three-way covenant linking God, the human family and the whole earth balancing the

needs of humanity and of nature (Lev. 25:1-7, 11-12). The covenant makes clear that economic activity should be ordered to reflect the mutual obligations between God and the human community. Israel's economy should be grounded in God's justice.

Repeatedly, the covenant of the Old Testament focuses on the needs and rights of those who often are excluded from the community. The rules of God's household demand that the poor (Ex. 23:6, Deut. 15:7-11), the stranger (Ex. 22:21-24), the sojourner (Deut. 10:19) and the widow and orphan (Ex. 22:22) all be accorded special protection and access to the livelihood of the household for the sake of God's grace to Israel ("for you were strangers in the land of Egypt," Ex. 22:21). The Sabbath and Jubilee Year urge a just ordering for overcoming exploitation through property redistribution and care of the earth. God's household is ordered to protect its weakest and most vulnerable members (Lev. 25:8-22). The same God who brings the universe into being and provides the earth with abundance intends that the needs of all God's creatures be met (Gen. 1:27-31). God's justice (Ps. 99:4) is opposed to patterns of economic inequality and power that leave some marginalized and others dispossessed.

When Israel establishes an empire with a king, the poor, the weak and the oppressed become central to God's economic concern. In the household of Israel, the king was called to have concern for the weak, save the lives of the poor and liberate them from oppression and violence (Ps. 72:12-14, cf. Jer. 22:15-16). When their ordering of Israel's household generates affluence but exploits or ignores the poor, God's prophets challenge Israel's kings to account. Prophetic denunciation of such royal economic policy is pervasive in the Old Testament, and prophetic judgment includes the warning that God will disrupt the order of Israel's household for the sake of the poor even as God has disrupted Pharaoh's household (Isa. 10:1-3, Amos 4:1-2, Jer. 22:13-14).

In Jesus, God becomes poor (II Cor. 8:9) and shares the suffering, the life and the death of the poor and dispossessed. God in Jesus Christ reigns as no other ruler, not set above, but in suffering love with all people. It is this God who is God in every dimension of our life -- spiritual and economic, secular and sacred (Ps. 24:1, Col. 1:15-21). According to the Gospel of Luke, Jesus inaugurates his public ministry by announcing that he has been anointed to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives and to set at liberty the oppressed (Lk. 4:18). Jesus' public ministry is the announcement that God's household is open to all to whom it had been

systematically closed by rules of the world's economy.

The world of Jesus is the world of Rome, a most efficient, successful and yet corrupt political economy. The empire's economy, for those who were able and willing to compete successfully within its household rules, was at its peak. Yet the focus of Jesus' life and ministry was not these people. In his preaching we encounter again and again a challenge to economic greed and oppression which are based on the values of accumulation and exploitation. In the sayings and actions of Jesus the reign of God's justice reverses precisely those values upon which the human economy depends for its success:

Blessed are you poor...
Woe to you who are rich...
Blessed are you who hunger...
Woe to you who are full...
Blessed are you who weep...
Woe to you who laugh ...
Blessed are you when people despise you and exclude you...
Woe to you when people speak well of you..
(Lk. 6:20-26)

Through his own table fellowship among the excluded, his signs and wonders among the outcasts and in his crucifixion outside the gates, Jesus took on himself the suffering of God with the poor and all who are excluded from justice within the household. Through Jesus' resurrection, God proclaims that abundant life is for all. In Christ, the covenant of love and justice in the household is made new and is expanded to the whole human family. The early church, in faithfulness to Jesus' life, death and resurrection, held in tension the coming reign of God and the values which undergird the human economy. In ordering its household, the early church rejected many of the principles operative within the larger economy. In its expectation of God's reign, it embraced both the life of the community as the basic motivation for economic production and human need as the basic principle of distribution within the household of God (Acts 2:44-45). It sought to follow Jesus' own orientation to those marginalized by the injustice of the political economy (James 5:4-6).

The reign of God coming in our midst is a continual invitation to repentance, for all economic systems fall short of reflecting the household of God and the covenant is continually breached by injustice. As Christians we must acknowledge that we cannot witness to the reign of God and also serve mammon (Mt. 6:24). Our economic lives are as subject to God's grace and God's judgment as our spiritual lives. We

shrink from this acknowledgment, however, because we are afraid to bear the suffering love of Christ in our own lives. We resist because we find our own vested interests challenged if we are faithful to God's covenant. We hesitate, for to acknowledge the reign of God and justice is to expose our loyalty to mammon and we are unmasked as idolaters. Yet it is promised that through faith, hope and love God can bring our lives into repentance. We are both haunted and energized by the certainty that God will continue to judge us, transform us and empower us until the rule of justice prevails in the human household.

Through our baptism into the body of Christ we are commissioned to participate with God in the just reordering of our economy. We stand under the demand of God that the economy be reorganized so that the poor may also share in the abundance of creation and be poor no more (Deut. 15:4-5). As stewards of the household, we are called to care for creation so that all members of the household will have "their portion of food at the proper time" (Lk. 12:42).

IV. SUFFERING WITHIN THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD

A. POVERTY AND AFFLUENCE

I am a citizen of the United States and a child of God, and so are my children. We are not just statistics. We are real human beings. (Cheryl Kramer, mother of four from Iowa)

Cheryl Kramer was forced by her economic situation to give up her children to foster care. Theirs is the human anguish behind the statistic that families with children are the "fastest growing" segment of the homeless, according to a recent National Academy of Sciences study. There are over 100,000 children homeless each night, with perhaps a quarter million children who experienced homelessness at some time during 1988.

Within the United States, one of the wealthiest countries in the world, economic growth and affluence have not eliminated significant levels of poverty. In 1987, 8.2 percent of white families lived below the poverty level. With respect to white families and African American families with a female head of household, 26.7 percent and 51.8 percent respectively lived below the poverty level. One fifth of all children in this country live in poor households. Moreover, the burden of poverty falls disproportionately on a few groups -- African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans,

Pacific Islanders and Asian Americans, women who head households, children and persons with disabilities. African American and Hispanic American families are nearly three times more likely to be poor than white families, and the incidence of poverty is even higher among Native Americans. Growing numbers of the homeless inhabit our streets. Because of poverty, millions of Americans are without adequate nutrition, health care and shelter.

On a global level, the overwhelming majority of the human family confront poverty, poor health and lack of education. One in five lives in absolute and dehumanizing poverty, facing a daily struggle to survive. Although the world food supply can provide enough for all, some 770 million people do not get sufficient food for an active and healthy life. Persistent hunger throughout the world dooms new generations of children to prolonged problems caused by severe malnutrition at an early age. There are more adult illiterates, more unemployed, more persons suffering from ill health and more people unable to satisfy their basic needs for food and clean water than there were 25 years ago.

The gap between degrading poverty and dazzling wealth has become evermore pronounced. In the U.S., the wealthiest 20 percent of all households own 75 percent of all assets and earn almost half of all income, and these shares have increased during the past decade. At a global level, the disparities in income are enormous and increasing. In 1983, 20 percent of the world's population received 68 percent of the world's income. Low-income countries in Asia, Africa and Central America, with nearly half the world's population, account for only five percent of global income. During the past ten years, standards of living in the poorest countries have fallen further behind.

B. RACISM

The historical record of how white Europeans conquered North America by destroying the native population and how they then built their new nation's economy on the backs of kidnapped Africans who had been turned into chattel are facts that can hardly be denied. . . White America has yet to recognize the extent of its racism - that we are and have always been a racist society - much less to repent of its racial sins. (Jim Wallis, editor of Sojourners Magazine)

Racism is the systematized oppression of one race by another. In 1984, the National Council of Churches defined racism as "racial prejudice plus power." This position maintains that privileges conferred upon the

majority by virtue of its racial origins are supported by a self-sustaining system of institutions and structures which economically benefits from racism. Hence, the Commission for Racial Justice of the United Church of Christ defined racism as "economically-empowered racial prejudice and discrimination."

In specific terms, these policies translate into an unemployment rate in American Indian communities ranging from 70 to 90 percent. Alcoholism, and other forms of substance abuse, has touched about 90 percent of individuals in the American Indian community. Hispanic Americans, 85 percent of whom live in urban areas, are a disproportionately poor group living in substandard inner-city housing. The poverty rate for Hispanics was 28.2 percent in 1987, significantly higher than the already elevated rate of 21.9 percent in 1977. Over the last eight to ten years, poverty spread more rapidly among Hispanics than among any other group. Likewise, economic motivations played a role in the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, when war hysteria was used as a smokescreen for the stealing of land and other possessions. The majority of Japanese Americans in Hawaii were not put in concentration camps because most of them were lowly-paid pineapple and sugar plantation workers in 1942. Japanese Americans, however, owned land in California and were supplying approximately 90 percent of the vegetable crop in the state.

African Americans, who were forcibly brought to the U.S. as slaves, continue to suffer from economic exploitation. Their unemployment rate in 1986 was 14.5 percent as compared to a white unemployment rate of 6.0 percent. African Americans between ages 16-19 suffered a staggering unemployment rate of 39.3 percent. Today, whites enjoy 12 times the net worth of African Americans. The median net worth of African American households is \$3,400, compared to \$39,100 for white households. Unfortunately, Martin Luther King's words still apply: "There were slaves when [the Declaration of Independence] was written; there were slaves when it was adopted; and to this day, black Americans do not have life, liberty nor the privilege of pursuing happiness, and millions of poor white Americans are in economic bondage that is scarcely less oppressive."

C. MILITARIZATION

In the councils of Government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of mis-

placed power exists and will persist. (Dwight D. Eisenhower, January 17, 1961)

The fuel consumed by the Pentagon in a single year would run the entire U.S. public transit system for 22 years. For the cost of one stealth bomber (\$516 million), we could construct 9,285 units of housing for low income families, the elderly and the handicapped. The world's annual military budget equals the income of 2.6 billion people in the 44 poorest nations. Military defense budgets in the Third World are about seven times as large as in 1960. More wars were fought in 1987 than in any previous year on record; four-fifths of the deaths in those wars were civilian.

Worldwide, nations devote an outrageous amount of their resources to the military sector, both to dominate other nations as well as to protect themselves. This massive diversion of the earth's limited resources, nearly one trillion dollars per year, involves nearly all nations, draining funds for internal development and basic human services. The competition between the United States and the Soviet Union has provided the major impetus for the arms race. The most rapid growth in military spending with the most pernicious consequences, however, has taken place in the Third World countries, where military outlays have increased seven-fold since 1960.

The U.S. government today is aligned with people and governments all over the world who want to keep power and wealth in the hands of the few. This policy is necessary to protect U.S. transnational global interests. Unfortunately, for the majority of the people of the world, East-West conflicts have been effectively used by the U.S. military-industrial complex to obtain billions of dollars from U.S. taxpayers to maintain the injustices and privileges of the existing global economic order.

D. ECONOMIC DISLOCATION

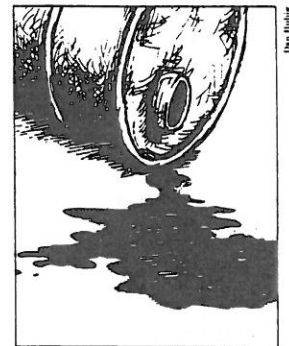
\$3.35 an hour jobs don't come near to providing even the basics for three kids. I've been working enough of them to know. (Selena Barr, mother of three from North Carolina)

In 1968, full-time employment at minimum wage resulted in an income slightly above the poverty level for a family of three. In 1988, full-time minimum wage employment yielded 74 percent of the poverty income level for a family of three.

In recent years, Americans have experienced the meaning of such terms as "economic dislocation,"

"capital flight," and "plant closures" as the character of the U.S. economy has been changed from a leading manufacturing to a corporate service economy. Since reaching a peak in 1973, real U.S. wages declined by 15 percent. The congressional Joint Economic Committee reports that 60 percent of all jobs created since 1979 pay less than \$7,000 a year. Thus, government statistics are misleading, causing one to incorrectly assume that Americans have benefited by greater employment. Once the largest creditor nation, by 1986 the U.S. was the largest debtor nation. In the course of these major structural changes, declining farm prices and land values and the displacement of farmers by agribusiness in rural areas threaten to end widespread ownership of agricultural land by productive working farm families. Unregulated movement of jobs and capital between regions and across countries results in factory closings that leave individual workers without jobs and whole communities without a means of livelihood.

In the global economy many of these trends are accentuated. The internationalization of capital and the global scope of operations of transnational corporations give developing countries little control over major disruptions of their economies. Economic problems, whether recession, inflation or changes in access to markets, produce a terrible toll in human suffering, particularly in the poorest and most vulnerable economies, and the burden of adjustment falls disproportionately on the poor. Since 1982, debtor countries have been paying more funds in debt servicing than they have received in new loans. In 1987, this negative capital flow exceeded 29 billion dollars.



E. ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION AND RESOURCE DEPLETION

During the next three decades man will drive an average of 100 species to extinction everyday. . . The present rate is at least 1,000 times the pace that has prevailed since prehistory. Even the mass extinctions 65 million years ago that killed off the dinosaurs and countless other species did not significantly affect

flowering plants. . . But these plant species are disappearing now, and people, not comets or volcanos, are the angels of destruction. Moreover, the earth is suffering the decline of entire ecosystems -- the nurseries of new life-forms. . . British ecologist Norman Myers has called it the "greatest single setback to life's abundance and diversity since the first flickerings of life almost four billion years ago." (Time Magazine, January 2, 1989)

A century of haphazardly producing and disposing of toxic wastes now endangers the earth's rivers, lakes, oceans and air. Acid rain from the burning of fossil fuels imperils lakes, rivers and forests, and comprises a health risk in some areas. Nuclear accidents and nuclear wastes threaten the life-supporting capacity of the earth. Increases in carbon dioxide levels from the burning of fossil fuels appear to be creating a global greenhouse effect that will significantly alter climatic conditions.

In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development commented that "humanity has the ability to make development sustainable -- to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The concept of sustainable development does imply limits. . . but sustainable development requires meeting the basic needs of all and extending to all the opportunity to fulfill their aspiration for a better life. A world in which poverty is endemic will always be prone to ecological and other catastrophes."

F. POWERLESSNESS

When I give food to the poor they call me a saint, when I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a communist. (Dom Helder Camara, when Archbishop of Recife, Brazil)

In the years since the inception of the global debt crisis, the standard of living has sharply deteriorated in most Third World countries. Do we dare ask why?

Standards of living in the poorest countries have fallen further behind during the last ten years as the global debt crisis has caused a devastating impact on debtor countries. Per capita consumption among the 17 most debt-troubled nations has fallen by 11 percent since 1980. A number of the poorest debtor countries have seen their real incomes plunge by as much as two-thirds during this period. Children are the first and most vulnerable victims. UNICEF estimates that 40,000 children die everyday from malnutrition and easily preventable diseases. Schools

and health clinics are closing because of cuts in government social spending and the high cost of imported supplies.

At the global level the emergence of a global economy characterized by mutual interdependence and shared problems has not been accompanied by the creation of institutions and processes for dealing with these new economic realities. Poor countries are caught in a spiral of unstable and frequently declining prices for the agricultural commodities they export, with limited access to markets in industrialized countries, capital for investment or new technology. The result is massive indebtedness of many Third World countries that further increases their vulnerability because even small changes in global interest rates or prices can change drastically their economic prospects. Moreover, the global debt crisis has eroded the sovereignty of indebted countries by giving the International Monetary Fund the power to demand major structural reforms and stringent austerity programs as the condition for extending financing to meet interest and debt payments.

Within the United States, many families and individuals feel they have little control over their own economic future. Distant economic policies and events result in high inflation or unemployment and threaten income security. Corporate decisions often have enormous impact on not only the workplace but entire communities. Indeed, we now live in an age where many middle-class families find it increasingly difficult to balance the budget, and the poor live in an even more precarious situation in which any unforeseen economic problem may leave them homeless. In addition to homelessness, this has meant loss of health insurance coverage, family farm foreclosures, declining quality of life, an environment whose very ability to sustain life is threatened by human disasters and many other forms of what the Rev. Jesse Jackson termed "economic violence." Rising housing prices provide wealth to current homeowners, but exclude younger families from home ownership. A sense of economic helplessness creates stress and induces passivity, leading people to drop out of active participation in the social, political and economic organization of their communities.

V. THE MARKET ECONOMY: PROMISES AND PROBLEMS

As Christians we are called to participate in God's reign by reshaping our human household in the light of our vision of a just economy. Through our covenant with God, we are responsible to God and to our sisters and brothers for the justice of the

economic institutions in which we participate. That accountability is even greater in a democratic system through which each citizen retains the political voice to challenge harmful policies and to promote justice. In confronting and confessing the injustices that exist within our own economic institutions, we also express our conviction that God works with and through us to create a more just economic order.

Members of the United Church of Christ are part of a market-oriented economy and citizens of an industrialized capitalist nation that shapes and often dominates the global market economy. We must name and challenge the economic injustices that exist within the United States' economic institutions and practices, not because we prefer an alternative form of economic organization, but because this is our household. It is where our responsibilities lie as North American Christians.

A market economy has certain strengths and certain weaknesses. Among the strengths of a market economy are:

1. Markets are especially useful given the limitations of human beings to foresee all the consequences of actions and complex policies. The price system is more sensitive to shifts in supply and demand than is centralized planning. Resource allocation and re-allocation is more flexible and nuanced, and often, more efficient.
2. Combined with a democratic political system, the market economy provides enormous freedom of choice for those who are able to participate in it fully. Those with the resources to purchase goods have a wide selection from which to decide. Those with access to education and training can choose their careers freely. When large numbers of persons participate as equals in the market, power and decision-making are dispersed. There is some empirical evidence that states with genuine political liberties are market oriented, although the reverse is not true.
3. Market economies are typically very productive. The profit incentives embedded in a market system encourage the production of a wide range of goods and services. Incentives always exist for producers to increase their productivity through new technologies and more efficient use of workers and machines. Even a number of predominantly non-market economies, such as China, have recognized the advantage of allowing some competitive market forces to operate and provide vigor to the economic life of their nation.

4. A long history of economic growth and rising standards of living in market economies testify to the advantages of the market system for at least a portion of the population. In the U.S. since World War II, average hourly earnings adjusted for inflation have increased by 60 percent. However, it is also true that since 1970 average hourly earnings have been largely stagnant; increases in household income have occurred only because of an increase in the number of workers in the average household. In Japan and many of the market economies of Europe, capitalism combined with government policies have produced even higher rates of growth and higher and more widely distributed standards of living.

Juxtaposed against the vision of God's household, the suffering within our own household demonstrates that we face serious economic problems which markets have not alleviated. Not all of these problems are the direct result of the market system. Many of them result from the interactions of our market economy with a host of humanly constructed social and political institutions. Beyond this, Christian faith affirms that there are other factors than market factors which should motivate our economy, and other claims upon us, including the claims of conscience and of righteousness.

Standing beside the strengths of a market economy are these weaknesses:

1. The market system does not guarantee that the minimum resources needed to fulfill basic human needs will be available to all citizens. Market exchange cannot guarantee equity of social justice. In fact, when combined with already existing inequities of wealth or competence or other forms of social power, market exchange can become, for many, an exchange of desperation. Those who are excluded from or unable to participate in the labor market -- particularly children, the elderly, the handicapped, and persons with inadequate skills -- typically experience poverty, poor health, and inadequate housing. Even some who work full time in the United States do not earn enough for adequate survival. Experience has demonstrated that economic growth alone is not enough to alleviate this problem. For instance, steady economic growth over the past five years has not reduced the poverty rate among minorities, and has not increased the earning power of many low-skilled workers.
2. Market exchange cannot count non-monetary costs and much of the vaunted efficiency of markets fails when a full cost-accounting does not occur. These uncounted costs, from pollution to the

damage done to communities through capital movement, must be dealt with and compensated outside of the market.

3. Unchecked exchange leads not only to gross inequalities of income and wealth but also to concentration of economic power without adequate public accountability. These concentrations of power not only distort the price-system but also encroach on government, the courts, educational institutions and the family. For instance, the size and the economic resources of large transnational corporations provide them with some degree of independence from national government boundaries. Even within industrialized societies where national governments have regulated certain aspects of corporate behavior with varying degrees of success, regional administrations, local communities and employees often have little influence on corporate behavior. Problems of public control and corporate accountability are magnified in poor countries, where the size and resources of transnational corporations often exceed that of the state.

4. A market economy emphasizes individual choice and often ignores the importance of public concerns. On the one hand, individual choices are shaped and bounded by the community environment in which they are made. For instance, within a corporate setting individuals often see only certain actions as acceptable or possible. An analysis that emphasizes individual choice, but ignores the effects of the larger community upon that choice, is fundamentally flawed. On the other hand, an emphasis solely on individual action ignores the importance of considering the welfare of the entire economic household. The Christian message clearly states that self-interest is not an adequate approach to all economic decisions. There are times when the needs of the larger community, whether that be a family, a church or a nation, must take precedence over self-interest.

5. Market exchange is, by itself, indifferent to what is exchanged, and market systems will respond to military spending as well as the demand for Barbie dolls. A growing proportion of the budgets of both richer and poorer nations, a total of 15 trillion dollars since 1960, is going into military spending and away from human development. In a similar manner, the international market for illegal drugs responds to a demand, but produces materials that destroy human beings. Deciding what should be produced and what should not requires social decision as well as individual decision. Moreover, protecting non-market spheres of life, such as family privacy, requires external

restraint.

6. Market exchange encourages a society of mobility and consumption, often corrosive of community values. While it is true of other economies as well, market economies especially encourage false values and priorities. The accumulation of individual wealth and corporate profit is frequently the ultimate measure of success. This tempts people into believing that the accumulation of things is a primary measure of human worth and stature.

7. In the international arena, where markets often have even fewer restraints, the preceding effects are often exacerbated. The global market economy demonstrates even more clearly its inability to provide for the equitable distribution of resources. Although enough food can be produced worldwide for all humans to have a sufficient diet, serious problems of hunger and malnutrition exist around the world. The market does little to encourage the sharing and cooperation that would result in a better distribution of the world's resources. Many economic problems, such as pollution, labor migration and international investment flows, are not limited by national boundaries. Economic policy decisions made by large nations such as the United States impact not only their own citizens, but have major effects on the lives of people around the globe who have little input into those decisions. Existing economic institutions cannot adequately respond to these cross-national economic forces.

These standard defects vary in their impact on different historical circumstances. In the U.S. they are exacerbated by historical patterns of racism and sexism and other forms of exclusion. Institutional prejudices, e.g., racism and sexism, limit the extent to which "free choice" actually operates for individuals of a different race, sex, religion, sexual orientation or nationality. Thus, some people are consistently excluded from full participation in the economic household of our nation. Given the already alarming inequity of income and wealth, and the extraordinary numbers of marginal persons in our society, considerable restructuring must take place even for minimal justice. Moreover, the inequities and exclusion result in part from structural decisions already in effect, e.g., the "planned economy" of military expenditures, tax policies transferring income to corporations and other concentrations of economic power, the current incentives for corporate takeovers, and the penalizing of corporate savings and productive investment.

VI. STATEMENT OF CHRISTIAN CONVICTION

The UCC Statement of Mission reads: "Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we are called and commit ourselves. . . to praise God, confess our sin, and joyfully accept God's forgiveness. . ." In that spirit, the members of the United Church of Christ, its Instrumentalities, local churches, Associations, Conferences, and all national bodies confess that we live in a privileged society which has committed economic injustices in this nation and the world. We are called to confess that from places of privilege it is difficult to stand in solidarity with the poor and the oppressed.

We are called to confess that we have done too little to correct the economic injustices in the world.

We are called, in the Statement of Mission, to "name and confront the powers of evil within and among us." One of those powers is the worship of mammon (wealth) in all its forms, to which we have fallen prey.

Similarly, we are called to "repent our silence and complicity with the forces of chaos and death." Our silence and complicity contribute to the economic oppression of persons whom God loves.

Furthermore, we are called to live out the commandment of Jesus: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. . . you shall love your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:29-31)." Love for our neighbor compels us to act.

As we confess and repent, we declare our intention to work and struggle for a nation and a world in which every human being is empowered to live life fully, joyfully and in dignity.



A. MARKS OF A JUST ECONOMY

We affirm that to be involved in the transformation of economic life is an authentic Christian calling. Christ calls the Church to bear witness to God's sovereignty and presence among us. Christ calls us

from the idolatries of greed and materialism to a full relationship with God, creation and one another. Christ reveals God's suffering passion with the poor and uncovers God's reign of justice in our midst. In the practice of justice in the public economy the covenant of the human household with God is fulfilled and God is worshipped. Economic justice in God's household includes the following dimensions. They provide a standard by which to measure contemporary economic systems, as well as a vision which can guide and inspire efforts to create greater economic justice in today's world.

1. A just economy celebrates and serves the fundamental covenant purpose of human life, which is to love God and neighbor. The laws of economics are ultimately accountable to the law of God's love. The rules of the marketplace are not autonomous, but they are accountable to God's grace. Human beings do not live by bread alone. In view of the household God is seeking to create, the value of one's life is not measured by one's material possessions.

2. A just economy gives all persons access to the basic material necessities of life. When some people are excluded from the abundance of life which God intends for all persons, justice is denied. From its beginning the household of Jesus Christ has witnessed many evidences of injustice, including large numbers of people in need, and great gaps between rich and poor.

3. A just economy builds and enhances human communities of dignity and well-being. Only in actual human communities are mutual interdependence and dignity recognized. Economic policy should therefore serve to protect and strengthen such community. In a just economy, the division of labor reflects our mutual interdependence and underscores the importance of the participation of all human beings in the community. According to the new covenant in Christ, all individuals are committed to the well-being of the human household as part of their commitment to God.

4. A just economy is inclusive, involving all able people in responsible, participatory and economically rewarding activity. Excluded from productive and meaningful work and from the means of life, neither the individual nor the community can survive. Hence in a just economy, no one is unfairly disadvantaged or excluded from productive activity. Economic decision-making should reflect the needs and participation of all members of the community.

5. A just economy encourages creativity, skill

and diligence. Human productivity and a sense of vocation benefits all of society and provides a sense of accomplishment to individuals. The economic system should call forth the creative and creating nature of human beings.

6. A just economy assures equality of opportunity. Discrimination of any sort, whether based on such factors as race, class, age, ethnic origins, sexual orientation, physical disability, religion or gender, contradicts the fundamental Christian affirmation of the equality and worth of all human beings. Discrimination denies the inclusiveness of the human community. When inequality and prejudice are embedded in societal and institutional processes, this constitutes a form of social sin. Justice requires a commitment to affirmative action and structural changes that redress the effects of discrimination, domination and exploitation.

7. A just economy reflects God's passion for the poor and disadvantaged, enhancing the life opportunities of the poor, the weak and groups at the margin of society. Indeed, in a truly just economy there will be no poor. Economic resources should be so distributed that all individuals are empowered to participate fully in the economic system. A just economy seeks continually to redress imbalances in wealth and power so that the poor and weak can take control of their lives and shape their own future.

8. A just economy recognizes the integrity, fullness and sacredness of creation. Economic justice is understood to include environmental wholeness and an ethic that will ensure a sustainable future for the planet. Humanity is an integral part of an interrelated creation. To abuse, exploit and deplete resources or cause species' extinction for economic gain violates the integrity of creation, and, therefore, is an act of destruction. With time, there will likely be few survivors of major sustained ecological abuse.

9. A just economy acknowledges the dignity of human beings as made known in Jesus Christ, and guarantees the basic human rights necessary to maintain the sacredness of individuals. Human dignity involves the recognition of each person as a decision-maker in the community, so that no one is deprived of an active voice. This means recognizing rights to political liberty and participation, and economic rights to food, shelter and health care.

10. A just economy requires and promotes international peace and well-being. There is no genuine peace without justice, nor can there be justice without peace. In a just economy, the intent of

production should center on improving the lives of all citizens, and not on the proliferation of weapons.

B. IMPLICATIONS

Confronted by the suffering and inadequacies of our current economy, we are impelled toward change, seeking to bring greater justice into our economic household. Many of us are deeply troubled by the economic inequities we see within our nation and the world, but also deeply fearful of what greater economic equity and justice might mean for our own lives. We are unwilling to depend upon God alone for our security, and are frightened that economic reform might mean less economic security for ourselves. Some who have been successful in the market economy may find it difficult to acknowledge that the very system that brought them rewards has treated others unjustly. Some whose economic situation is precarious may fear that change will only make things worse. Many would happily vote for reform if it meant that the poor would become middle-income, but are afraid that it might mean instead that the middle-income will become poor. All of these fears we must honestly bring before God. We must confess our lack of faith, and ask God's help in overcoming our fears. We must center our lives in God's abundant love. Through worship, praise and prayer we can find the faith and courage that will enable us to fulfill our covenant with God, working toward an economy in which justice and peace prevail.

With a more faith-centered spirituality we prepare ourselves to actively seek both the cost and the joy of discipleship affirmed in the United Church of Christ Statement of Faith. As individuals this means evaluating our own lifestyles, to see if they are consistent with shared life in the household of God. We must find ways to educate and inform ourselves on the economic suffering of our neighbors and on possible ways in which we can help prevent such suffering in the future. An important part of this education involves talking with those whose economic perspectives differ from our own. We must actively seek out and openly listen to those who are the widow, the orphan and the sojourner of our day. The Church is an important place in which this listening can occur, for it is the one place where people from all economic backgrounds gather together around the table in complete equality before God.

Changes in our own individual lives, however, while a crucial and necessary step, are not enough. Major institutional changes must also occur in the economy

of our nation as well. While recognizing the strengths of the market, we must also realize its limits. We must develop mechanisms within the political system which supplement and reform some aspects of the market economy, rectifying economic injustices and increasing the ability of all individuals to be full economic participants. This requires joining together in citizen action. We recognize that there is no clear or easy way to move from biblical and theological mandates to particular policy recommendations. Yet we strongly affirm the following political and economic changes which address some of the injustices and problems in our current economy. We acknowledge that long-term efforts will be necessary to implement these approaches.

1. In order to create a country in which the promise of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness is fulfilled for each person, we are committed to achieving an economic "bill of rights" that will provide:

- A guaranteed national minimum income level, ensuring every person access to adequate food, clothing and shelter;
- A non-discriminatory national health care program available to all persons;
- A quality education system that provides to every person nurture, enrichment and education from infancy to adulthood;
- A right to employment consistent with each person's potential;
- A guaranteed right of every person to access housing that is permanent and affordable.

2. To further the promotion of human rights on a global level, we affirm the need for the implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, endorsed by the United States, which calls all countries to recognize the economic, human and political rights of their citizens. To this end, we reiterate the appeal that the U.S. government ratify the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and other human rights' conventions approved by the United Nations that are pending before the Senate.

3. To create a more democratic economic system in which all people participate and through which all are nurtured, we affirm the need for wider participation in ownership and management of economic institutions and for more inclusive and demo-

cratic patterns of decision-making in private and public organizations. Economic democracy may include greater use of democratic planning at local and national levels, as well as greater opportunities for worker participation in workplace decisions. Economic democracy also involves facilitating and empowering the poor, racial and ethnic peoples, women, low-income and disempowered groups to participate on a more equal basis in the political decision-making process. Further, economic democracy entails framing economic issues in ways that informed citizens can consider policy alternatives, make intentional decisions and express their views.

4. We affirm the need to reorder national and global priorities away from military expenditures and toward a just peace economy, as stated in the Just Peace Pronouncement adopted by the Fifteenth General Synod. The ending of the Cold War now enhances the feasibility of moving from a national security to a just peace economy in which the promotion of human welfare and the elimination of poverty are our primary goals.

5. We affirm the need for public and private sector initiatives that encourage the development of community-based enterprises for creating jobs by meeting local needs such as housing and recreation, and which are accountable to local residents and organizations. Such community development corporations can be funded by government sources or by religious, labor or other non-profit groups which may have endowment funds or pension funds to invest.

6. We affirm the need for the development of mechanisms that increase the public accountability and responsibility of corporations and governmental agencies involved in economic decision-making.

7. We affirm the need to improve environmental stewardship by the United States and other countries to assure that economic development does not poison the rich abundance of creation for short-term monetary gain. Better stewardship entails intentional and consistent efforts to consider the long-term environmental implications in all economic planning and development and to take measures to protect our fragile ecosystem. Responsible stewardship also requires legally enforceable programs that regulate the use and disposal of toxic wastes and industrial hazards. We additionally support investment in the development and adoption of more sustainable technologies compatible with the needs of future generations. We support the need to strengthen cross-national organizations in their capacity to deal

with global environmental issues.

8. We affirm the need for the entire global community to strengthen global economic institutions or establish new ones that will address cross-national economic concerns. In particular,

a. World economic institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund or the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, should be restructured to include greater participation on the part of poorer nations in their decisions, so that these institutions reflect the perspectives and needs of the poorer nations as well as the interests of richer countries;

b. New economic and financial institutions need to be developed to reach and empower the poor more directly;

c. More rational and equitable strategies should be designed to deal with debt problems at home and abroad. For developing countries this includes shifting the burden from the poor and sharing the responsibility for repayment more equitably among international banks, governments of the industrialized countries and multilateral economic institutions. Such mechanisms could include ceilings on debt service based on ability to pay, refinancing arrangements to reduce repayment burdens, debt reduction and major debt elimination in the poorest countries. The inability of poor nations to repay debt should not lead to exploitation by creditor nations;

d. Institutions should be developed that provide international regulation of the behavior of transnational private corporations and that support individual countries in their oversight of these organizations;

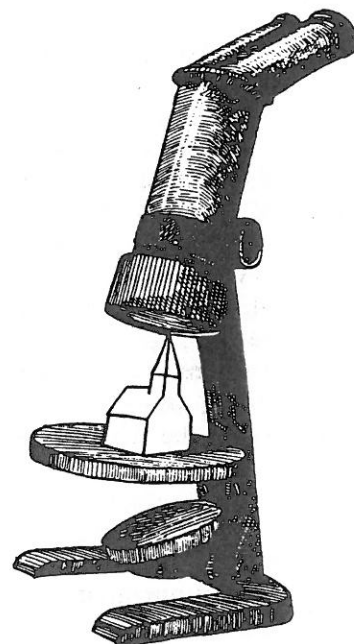
e. Equitable and secure ways of funding international institutions need to be actively pursued that will provide resources to address international problems and needs.

Certainly, judged against the vision of justice in the household of God, all current economic systems fall short and are unjust. These affirmations suggest a direction through which our existing economic systems can be transformed. We recognize that these affirmations, if implemented, would only be first steps toward full economic justice. Taken with God's help, they will move us closer to a household in which all may find abundance. As we progress in this struggle, however, we will necessarily recognize new and additional tasks that need to be undertaken and that demand our attention and support. The Church should be actively involved in envisioning ways in which greater economic justice can be achieved.

Called by Christ to participate in God's reign, the Church must take a leadership role in the movement toward greater economic justice for the whole human household. Thus, the Church must become a model of economic justice in its own institutional practices. This will require reviewing and reforming its internal economy to reflect an active concern with issues of economic equity and justice, supporting the struggles of the poor throughout the world and encouraging the formation of Christian communities which practice resource sharing and income equity and which encourage advocacy and action with the poor.

The Church should also invite Christians to review and reform their own individual lives, taking God's grace and God's reign as the central source and purpose of life.

Finally, the Church must continue to affirm the vision of justice and peace to which all faithful Christians are called. It must actively preach God's reign of suffering love within the human household. Within the Church, individuals and groups from different economic backgrounds can worship together as equals with a common confession to one faith. The Church provides a place where reconciliation and recognition of common interests can begin to emerge. The Proposal for Action which accompanies this Pronouncement provides a plan whereby the United Church of Christ can begin to implement this vision.



PROPOSAL FOR ACTION ON CHRISTIAN FAITH: ECONOMIC LIFE AND JUSTICE

I. SUMMARY

This Proposal for Action affirms the United Church of Christ's commitment to be actively concerned with justice in our economic institutions and daily economic lives. It delineates the strategies and specific actions by which all parts of the United Church of Christ (individuals, local churches, instrumentalities, Conferences, Associations and seminaries) can work for economic justice as an imperative of our affirmation and understanding of the Christian faith.

II. BACKGROUND STATEMENT

This Proposal for Action is based upon the Pronouncement on Christian Faith: Economic Life and Justice. The Pronouncement on Christian Faith: Economic Life and Justice is a synthesis of two proposed Pronouncements submitted to the Seventeenth General Synod. This Proposal has been developed in response to the request of the Fourteenth General Synod to engage in a study of economics and theology, and to recommend an appropriate response by the United Church of Christ.

The Pronouncement on Christian Faith and Economic Life has been informed by feedback to the study paper, Christian Faith and Economic Life, provided by a diverse group of United Church of Christ members. The racial and ethnic members of the United Church of Christ felt that the issue of racism in the context of envisioning appropriate economic life from a Christian faith perspective needed further articulation; this was provided in the Pronouncement on Christian Faith and Economic Justice. The Seventeenth General Synod celebrates the active involvement of diverse groups in the discussion and formulation of statements on the highly complex issues of Christian faith and economics presented in these two documents. Hence, the Seventeenth General Synod celebrates the fulfillment of the United Church of Christ's motto: "that they may all be one."

The synthesized Pronouncement presents policy statements for the United Church of Christ on the issue of economic justice. This Proposal for Action, therefore, delineates a specific program of action strategies that will enable the United Church of Christ to become effectively involved at all levels in the struggle to ensure that economic justice is a

reality for all of God's people in the United States and throughout the world.

This Proposal for Action further seeks to implement, through Christian social action, the programmatic thrust of the Pronouncement on Christian Faith: Economic Life and Justice which seeks to remain faithful to the Statement of Faith and the Statement of Mission of the United Church of Christ.

III. DIRECTIONAL STATEMENTS AND GOALS

"God calls the worlds into being, creates persons in God's image, and sets before each one the ways of life and death..."

Our lives are derived from and lived in relationship with God. Our joy is to live in covenant with God and one another in God's household. Our delight is to use freely and faithfully the gifts of God who is Creator.

"In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior, God has come to us..."

As people of the United Church of Christ, affirming our Statements of Faith and Mission, we seek within the Church Universal to participate in God's mission of economic justice for all of God's peoples and to follow the liberating way of the crucified and risen Christ...

We have confessed and stated our Christian conviction to struggle against all forms of economic injustice in this nation and throughout the world...

We establish as a goal the just transformation of the market economy into an economic system that fundamentally ensures economic, environmental, gender, racial and social justice and equality in the United States...

We further establish as a goal the just transformation of the global economy into an economic order that fundamentally ensures economic, environmental, gender, racial and social justice for all of God's peoples throughout the world...

To acknowledge God's reign is to shape on earth a community capable of the humanity exemplified in Jesus Christ and to take the suffering love of God made known in the life, crucifixion and resurrection

of Jesus as the model for a covenant household of justice and love. Thus, God's reign does not mean to flee the rigors of earth and seek some heavenly holiness, rather is sought through service, advocacy and covenant.

Based on this confession and affirmation, the Seventeenth General Synod calls for the adoption of the following actions.

IV. CALL TO MEMBERS

The Seventeenth General Synod calls members to develop a faith-oriented understanding of economic life by engaging in:

1. Regular public worship, the center and foundation of Christian life, which renews our covenant with God to seek justice in God's household;
2. Prayer and spiritual discipline, to strengthen the struggle for economic justice, which includes tithing or giving to share resources with those who have less;
3. Theological reflection on the basic tenets of Christian Faith to understand better the imperatives of God's mission of economic justice;
4. Efforts to adopt a personal and family lifestyle consistent with life in the household of God and God's creation;
5. Personal contact with and listening to individuals of other races, classes, income levels, economic backgrounds and nationalities;
6. Personal initiatives and voluntary service to promote economic justice, including involvement in the political process.

V. CALL TO LOCAL CHURCHES

The Seventeenth General Synod calls local churches and their members to respond to the call for economic justice in their worship and education activities, financial decisions and social outreach.

1. Worship and Spiritual Concerns: We call churches to:
 - a. preach on God, giver of abundant creation, who is a lover of justice and creation, and on the justice-seeking ministry of Christ. This

includes regularly incorporating visions of economic justice into public worship;

- b. encourage all members to pray, meditate and engage in those spiritual disciplines that help relate Christian faith to economic life;

- c. minister to and support those members struggling to live just Christian lives in their work environments, as well as those members and families who are struggling to transform their personal lifestyles and commitments to be more consistent with seeking justice and wholeness in God's household;

- d. implement a program of Christian education that informs and challenges us to knowledge of economic injustices and to commitments to develop more just economic structures and systems.

2. Study and Education: We call churches to engage in study and educational programming that will enable their members better to reflect on and act for economic justice. We call churches to:

- a. establish study groups to engage in Bible study, and to utilize the foregoing Pronouncement, the study paper Christian Faith and Economic Life, and other documents that relate Christian faith to economic life and the economy of the environment;

- b. study the economy of their local communities, analyze local economic inequities and injustices, identify the social forces, conditions and the policies which contribute to economic suffering, and explore ways their church can address these problems. This may include providing opportunities for dialogue between people of different economic backgrounds;

- c. seek out churches of different racial and economic backgrounds and engage in study and dialogue with them on issues of economic justice;

- d. increase members' awareness of global economic issues and the concerns and perspectives of persons around the world on these issues. This may include explicitly studying the differing views of the advantages and disadvantages of the market economy held by people who have suffered or benefited from the promises and problems of the market;

- e. support and encourage church members regarding their own economic pain and problems.

3. An Economic Audit of the Church: We call local churches to examine critically the economy of their own church. We call churches to:

- a. invest church endowment funds and other church investments in a manner consistent with

the economic justice commitments of the United Church of Christ. This means careful attention to the policies of the financial managers, the financial institutions and the issuers of securities that are selected, as well as active monitoring of the investment decisions made by church managers and/or church oversight committees;

b. examine the extent to which the church budget provides equitably for the salaries, pensions and benefits of all church staff;

c. examine and make sure that the church budget reflects a serious commitment to promote economic justice in the community and the world;

d. study and adopt procedures in the institutional lifestyle of the church that are consistent with life in the household of God, including regular self-examination of the extent to which the church is focusing on acquisitive and materialistic patterns of behavior, often reflected in an overemphasis on such items as cushions, carpets or organs;

e. implement just church policies for hiring and firing of staff, with particular attention to the hiring of minorities and women;

f. examine purchasing practices with attention to the equal employment and affirmative action practices of suppliers and vendors;

g. audit church property and equipment for responsible energy use, resource conservation, recycling practices, sound land use and less polluting forms of transportation.

4. Advocacy for Economic Justice: We call local churches to:

a. join and participate actively in the Justice and Peace Network of the United Church of Christ, the Network for Environmental and Economic Responsibility, and in interfaith advocacy organizations such as IMPACT and Interfaith Action for Economic Justice;

b. work on economic injustices within the local community and support community organizations that enhance the life opportunities and political voice of poor and minority groups, and that increase local economic control;

c. interpret, support and participate in the work for economic justice conducted by the Conferences and the national boards and Instrumentalities of the United Church of Christ.

VI. CALL TO UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST INSTRUMENTALITIES, CONFERENCES, ASSOCIATIONS AND SEMINARIES

The Seventeenth General Synod calls national United Church of Christ Instrumentalities, Conferences, Associations, and the closely-related seminaries of the United Church of Christ to respond to the call for economic justice through education, institutional change and advocacy.

1. The Economy of the United Church of Christ: We call the United Church of Christ to work for economic justice by transforming its own internal organizational structure to conform to life in the household of God, so it reflects a commitment to economic justice. We call the United Church of Christ to:

a. establish or commission existing committees for economic justice at the Association and Conference levels;

b. sponsor research and development of a critical analysis of current economic justice issues and make recommendations for economic structures and systems that ensure economic justice for all people;

c. examine and, where appropriate, encourage change in the distribution of income and resources among Conferences and Associations as well as between wealthier and poorer churches, seeking greater sharing based on mission and need;

d. continue to promote socially responsible investment of the endowments and pensions of congregations, Conferences and instrumentalities. Where appropriate to the charter of the investment funds, the United Church of Christ should encourage greater use of investments that address economic justice objectives, but may entail greater risk or lower yields;

e. examine equity in salaries, pensions and benefits paid to United Church of Christ employees, and design structures that address current inequities;

f. establish national and regional programs and projects that seek economic justice in the United States and in the world;

g. assure that policies for hiring and firing of staff are just with particular attention to the hiring of minorities and women;

h. confront racism and sexism within the church, strengthening the affirmative action activities of the denomination;

i. reorient the interpretation, promotion, funding patterns and priorities of mission programs to reflect the United Church of Christ's commitment to economic justice;

j. develop ways to involve more people from the local church level, particularly from poor and minority communities, in the decision-making and budgeting process of the denomination.

2. Study and Education:

a. We call upon all Instrumentalities and other national bodies to research and publish critical and constructive analyses of present economic structures and systems and make recommendations for just economic structures and systems;

b. We call closely-related seminaries of the United Church of Christ to participate in the development of a theology which demonstrates the relevance of biblical faith to economic systems and practices in the world and which affirms the wholeness of God's creation. Seminaries should be encouraged to offer courses that give students in the ministry a grounding in economics and economic justice, as well as provide similar continuing education opportunities for clergy and concerned lay people;

c. We call the appropriate United Church of Christ instrumentalities to collect or develop and distribute curriculum materials which foster the study of economic justice issues by youth and adults in local churches;

d. We call the national bodies of the United Church of Christ, along with Conferences and Associations, to develop seminars and other programs that provide for the study of economic justice issues;

e. We call the Office for Church in Society, the United Church Board for World Ministries, the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, the Commission for Racial Justice and the Council for Racial and Ethnic Ministries to encourage the study of the Pronouncement on Christian Faith: Economic Life and Justice and of supporting documents. These groups are encouraged to appoint a task force to expand this pronouncement into a fuller study resource, similar to A Just Peace Church, and, in cooperation with Conferences and Associations, to conduct a church-wide study process;

f. We call the Stewardship Council to develop a Sunday bulletin back page series which tells stories of economic justice and injustice, and relates these issues to biblical faith, and to utilize other means of communicating economic justice themes such as mission moments and offering material;

g. We call all bodies of the Church to provide for study opportunities and dialogue which mix people across economic, racial and national lines, providing the opportunity for all groups in the Church to listen to the concerns of those whose perspectives differ.

3. Advocacy for Economic Justice: We call the various bodies of the United Church of Christ, under

the leadership of the Office for Church in Society, to increase their advocacy efforts on behalf of economic justice in the economic life of this nation and the international community. We call OCIS, UCBWM, UCBHM and CRJ to:

a. lobby for legislative efforts that embody the policy proposals in Section VI of the foregoing Pronouncement;

b. continue efforts to develop the Justice and Peace Network, placing emphasis on issues of economic justice and their links with peace issues;

c. initiate efforts to develop an economic justice advocacy network to address the linkage between economic and environmental justice issues;

d. empower churches and individuals to effectively organize and to change conditions of poverty;

e. gather poor people in conferences and hearings, so that their stories may be heard within churches, the media and Congress;

f. continue to advocate divestment from all corporations doing business in South Africa and other nations where economic and racial oppression are commonplace;

g. continue to advocate for the medically indigent and physically disabled due to catastrophic illnesses such as AIDS.

4. Ecumenical Initiatives: We call the Office of the President to take the initiative in approaching the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the major Protestant denominations that have written public theologies of economics to discuss the development of an ecumenical statement on economic justice that would address the nation.

VII. CALL TO PARTICIPATION IN THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY

The Seventeenth General Synod calls upon all members, congregations, Associations, Conferences, Instrumentalities and related institutions in the United Church of Christ to recognize that we are members of a global community in which a majority of our brothers and sisters are poor. There is a need within this global community to create a new household, bearing one another's burdens and sharing God's gift of life together. To stand with God in solidarity with all people, particularly the poor and oppressed, and to challenge the value systems of this world, we call all parts of the United Church of Christ to:

1. Recognize the existence of one interdependent and global household and one mutually respon-

sible people. This includes support of grassroots people's movements involved in the struggle for justice, peace and full human development;

2. Participate in extensive people-to-people and congregational exchanges through the United Church Board for World Ministries, providing direct exposure to the situations and problems of churches and individuals in poorer countries;
3. Provide greater support to the ministries of partner churches, social service and relief programs, Christian seminaries, and educational, environmental and health institutions in poorer countries;
4. Participate in and support the World Council of Churches and other international interfaith institutions;
5. Invest in alternative financial institutions, such as the Ecumenical Development Cooperative Society or other lending arrangements, which promote socially desirable goals, such as housing, community economic development or projects initiated by the poor;
6. Solicit the participation of partner churches into United Church of Christ structures and mission programs;
7. Develop new and more effective programmatic relationships with sisters and brothers in the Third World that enhance the global struggle toward economic justice;
8. Provide national and international leadership toward the development of an effective global ecumenical movement for economic justice which has as its central goal the just transformation of the global economic order.

VIII. IMPLEMENTATION

The Seventeenth General Synod requests that the Office for Church in Society, in consultation with the United Church Board for World Ministries, the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, the Commission for Racial Justice and the Council for Racial and Ethnic Ministries, coordinate the implementation of this Proposal for Action through a broadly representative inter-agency and church-wide committee and make a detailed report to the Eighteenth and succeeding General Synods.

