

Christian faith and economics

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Our shared perspective

We believe that our ultimate hope comes from Christ who has overcome the powers of sin and death. In the light of that hope and faith by which our ancestors in the First and Radical Reformation lived, we see that we cannot solve the present predicament of humankind solely through human effort.

We believe that the kingdom of God - the reign of peace, justice, and love - is both already present among us and still to come in all its fullness. True discipleship today calls us to bear witness to this reality.

We believe that the Holy Spirit moves us to see that God is already at work in history in spite of human weakness and corruption. Our eschatological hope prompts us to join God's action towards justice, freedom, peace, and the redemption of creation, knowing that God challenges every *status quo*.

Some common affirmations related to economics

We affirm that our thought and practice in relation to economic matters are integral parts of Christian faith and life, rather than being separate from or of no direct concern to Christian faithfulness. According to the biblical story from the Exodus to Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom, God shows compassion particularly for the poor and disenfranchised. We cannot serve God and mammon.

We acknowledge God as creator of the world and owner of all things in it. We understand that we are called to be caring stewards of creation rather than exploiters of the earth. Hence we must speak prophetically against all manifestations of unrestrained and unqualified economic growth in the societies where we live.

We reaffirm the historic calling of the faith community to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, and to visit those in prison, in whom we meet Jesus. This compels us to stand with Jesus in his solidarity with the poor and

afflicted in every generation, both within and beyond the household of faith.

We recognize in our various traditions a biblical witness against dominant and oppressive economic practices and structures on the times. This witness has included protest against slavery, usury, greed, luxurious living, economic oppression, the accumulation of wealth, and particularly Christians' and the churches' all-too-frequent complicity in these practices.

We reject the spirit, logic, and practice of the predominant world economic system which destroys national economies through debt and trade mechanisms, impoverishes and causes the death of millions, and destroys the earth for profits' sake.

We accept the testimony of our various traditions to the biblical calling of believers to repent of our greed and avarice by renouncing our "sacred" claims on wealth and property, and by creating alternative habits of thought and patterns of shared economic practice in our personal and corporate existence. We believe that the churches' credibility depends on their - and our - willingness first to practise what is commended to others.

Some differences in the midst of shared perspectives

We recognize differences among us with regard to the primacy of Scripture for discerning God's will for our life and thought. Some of us believe that Jesus Christ as witnessed in the Scripture is the primary norm for discerning truth and right practice. Some of us appeal primarily to the Spirit's leading for direction in the present time.

We recognize that we have chosen a variety of alternative patterns to the dominant economic systems. Some have established communities of common production and goods as a normative Christian practice. Others have developed other forms of sharing and mutual accountability also as normative Christian practice. Still others would give dissenting witness while participating within the broader economic systems.

We acknowledge differences among us as to the means our witness in the form of protest may take. Some of us reject all types of coercion and violence; others of us may accept some types of coercion or violence as a last resort.

We are not yet of one mind on how to assume our responsibility for the world. Some of us believe that we are called to witness in the world by being the church as a new and just community separate from the world. Some of us believe that we are called to exercise our responsibility by becoming agents of economic justice in the social and economic structures of the society in which we live. Some of us believe that we are called primarily to be the church while also witnessing directly to those in power or expressing critical support of those in power or working within the structures of the society in which we live.

Some common commitments and areas of ongoing work

We affirm our desire to stay together and to grow together into a deeper and more committed fellowship.

We affirm that having jointly examined our roots, drawing on the

experiences of our respective communities throughout the centuries, we intend to continue to learn from our different stories. We believe they will be an ongoing source of encouragement and inspiration for today and tomorrow.

We commit ourselves to more modest lifestyles out of our commitment to economic justice and as a sign of our longing for a thorough structural change.

We agree to encourage our churches to accept a ratio of not more than 1 to 3 as a guideline for income differential between the minimum and maximum net income after taxes.

We agree to make our collective and individual investments conform to our professed values and to the goals of sustainable development in areas of poverty. This includes a reevaluation of the biblical prohibition of taking interest in the context of the modern economy.

We commit ourselves to seek and maintain in economic practice the equal dignity of women and men, and of all races and nationalities.

We shall seek to avoid sources of income which involve violence, harmful substances, oppression of human beings, and the misuse of natural resources.

We have been made aware of the biblical judgment on systems which accumulate power, land, and money in the hands of a few to the detriment of the people and creation. We want to study further the private individual or corporate accumulation of capital at the cost of the welfare of the people. We also wish to examine how this system is driven by consumerism and secured by wars against the poor. We wish to find solutions for this problem in the light of the gospel.

We agree that our responsibility to the earth includes bearing in mind our diminishing ecological resources, the dangers of polluting our environment, and the needs elsewhere in the world for resources we may waste.

We affirm our continued openness to work with all persons of goodwill on projects to save our ecology system.

We commit ourselves to encourage our churches and institutions to make increased funds available for ecological-justice programmes.

We invite individuals, communities and churches to join with us to meet the challenge of action for justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

Our concluding stance

We confess that we who come from diverse dissenting traditions are also heirs of a post-Constantinian world. We confess our temptation to seek power and influence. Yet we are learning again from our past that a Christian existence is fragile, uncertain, and risky. While we do not glorify poverty and suffering, we know that we may be called upon to join the marginalized and suffering. Our faith in Jesus Christ and dependence upon the Holy Spirit lets us see that we in all our efforts are sustained by God's forgiveness, grace and strength.