

MONDAY EVENING

Eliminate Substance Abuse Advocacy Services and Drug Alcohol Substance Abuse contracts	Whole communities affected by lack of drug treatment	\$9.6 Million	Four M-1 tanks
Eliminate all medical assistance to General Assistance recipients	101,000 people affected, as well as medical institutions	\$52.4 Million	One F/A-18 Navy fighter plane
TOTAL PUBLIC AID CUTS, including those listed	1,258,000 people	\$700 Million	Half of a Trident Submarine
TOTAL PROPOSED CUTS, including those listed	The whole state	\$900 Million	One B-2 bomber

14. SUNDAY WORSHIP OFFERING

The Moderator called on the Rev. Doris Powell. She announced that the Sunday worship offering was \$13,668.00.

15. SUSPENSION OF THE RULES TO CONTINUE DISCUSSION

Moderator Gosselink asked the body's feeling regarding continuing reports from the committees. A motion was made to suspend the rules and continue reports.

16. PROPOSED PRONOUNCEMENT "CHRISTIAN FAITH, PERSONAL STEWARDSHIP AND ECONOMIC SHARING"

Ms. Nancy Hamelberg, the Chairperson of Committee Three, introduced Mr. Kenneth Heasley who pointed out the changes made by the committee. Ms. Hamelberg moved that the body adopt the Proposed Pronouncement "Christian Faith, Personal Stewardship and Economic Sharing." Mr. Heasley spoke in favor of the Proposed Pronouncement.

91-GS-50 VOTED: The Eighteenth General Synod adopts the Pronouncement "Christian Faith, Personal Stewardship and Economic Sharing.

PRONOUNCEMENT CHRISTIAN FAITH, PERSONAL STEWARDSHIP AND ECONOMIC SHARING

SUMMARY

This pronouncement calls members of the United Church of Christ to be faithful stewards of God's gracious gifts to us and others for the benefit of all creation. The pronouncement grows out of a desire that the Church serve as an example of economic justice within its own community in solidarity with human need everywhere, thus showing its faith through faithful practice. This pronouncement recommends guidelines for giving that reaffirm the resolution on Stewardship of the Fourteenth General Synod.

BACKGROUND

This pronouncement is presented by the Stewardship Council in response to the direction of General Synod Sixteen "to prepare a pronouncement to be presented to General Synod Seventeen regarding personal stewardship and the idolatry of mammon, in the light of the work of the Task Force on Christian Faith and Economic Life." In order that this present pronouncement might follow the work of that task force, the Executive Council agreed to postpone its submission until the

Eighteenth General Synod. The Seventeenth General Synod adopted the Pronouncement "Christian Faith: Economic Life and Justice," growing out of the work of the Task Force on Christian Faith and Economic Life. The pronouncement presented here is intended to relate the issues of the Economic Life and Justice pronouncement to the two faith issues of personal stewardship and economic justice.

BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL RATIONALE

Throughout this statement of biblical rationale the word "righteousness" is used. It is an important word for the purposes of this study. By this is not meant either superficial piety or self-righteousness. The word is used in its positive biblical meaning. Throughout the Bible, the concept of righteousness (sedeq, sedeqah) includes moral justice. Two emphases of that moral justice are right conduct and right sharing. Justice and mercy are two sides of the same coin.

This call is the call of God to a spirituality based on grace, gratitude, and compassion. It hears the searching question of Jesus: "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and never do what I tell you?" (Luke 6:46 REB) It understands that growth in grace is coupled with willingness to let God guide and change the way we use and share the resources which God has entrusted to us.

Righteousness, in the Old Testament, also refers to the liberating acts of God (See Micah 6:5). It is of such a righteousness that Isaiah 45:8 (Revised English Bible translation) speaks:

Rain righteousness, you heavens,
let the skies above pour it down,
let the earth open for it
that salvation may flourish
with righteousness growing beside it.
I, the Lord, have created this.

Righteousness is linked to the biblical concept of shalom, peace and wholeness (Psalm 85:8-13, Isaiah 32:17-23). There will only be true wholeness and true peace where there is fairness and sharing.

THE OLD TESTAMENT

A look at stewardship in the Bible appropriately begins where the Bible begins, with the two stories in Genesis regarding the creation, Genesis 1:1-2:3 and 2:4-24. Though often used to justify the misuse of creation, these stories really tell us that the earth belongs to God and that human beings have been charged with tending the earth. The world and all that is in it comes to us and to all creatures as a gift from God, to be accepted, shared, and enjoyed in responsibility and in gratitude.

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It is right that human beings should use and enjoy the gifts of God's creation. Christian faith does not require us to reject material things. Rather, it asks (1) that we place our ultimate trust in the Creator instead of the creation (Isaiah 44:24, Romans 1:25, 1 Timothy 6:17-19), (2) that we receive all things in gratitude as a gift from God (Deuteronomy 8:10, Psalm 103:1,2), and (3) that we be willing to share with others (Isaiah 58:6-11, Hebrews 13:16), indeed with all creatures (Genesis 9:9-13, Hosea 2:18).

All three of these ways of living are symbolized in the Old Testament by the offerings of tithes and of the first fruits of the harvest. Both kinds of offering were given to celebrate God's goodness and to care for the needs of others. Both the first fruits and the tithe were to be shared with the needy, with those who had no harvest (Deuteronomy 14:28-15:11). And both were to be given in proportion to God's blessing (Deuteronomy 16:17).

An especially important chapter in the Bible for understanding the tithe and the first fruits offerings is Deuteronomy 26, which describes the harvest gifts to God and neighbor against the backdrop of God's righteousness, God's saving deeds. An individual is to bring the first-fruits of harvest to the priest, set them down there, and repeat a "statement of faith," that God "brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. Now I have brought the first-fruits of the soil which you, Lord, have given me." (Deuteronomy 26:9-10, REB).

Besides tithing and first fruits, there was a third way in which the people of Israel shared with the needy, the practice of gleaning, so important in the beautiful story of Ruth. Described in Deuteronomy 24: 19-22, the practice involved gathering by widows, orphans, and aliens of the fruit or grain reserved for them in the edges of the fields and also the fruit or grain left over by the reapers. The Exodus account gives the reason: "You must not wrong or oppress an alien; you were yourselves aliens in Egypt" (Exodus 22:21, REB).

Biblical concern for the unfortunate grew out of a sense of the solidarity of Israel, as well as a broader human concern for the sojourner. In the Bible, "righteousness" means not only justice and uprightness, but also, as a necessary part of that, the sharing of God's bounty with all. To give to the needy is not only an act of charity; it is an act of justice, since all things belong to God, and God wills that God's people share.

When Israel moved from an agrarian to a mixed economy, the sharing of the harvest was supplemented by the sharing of possessions through "alms" or benevolent giving. Judaism developed a system of welfare, based upon the tithe for the poor (Deuteronomy 14:28-29, Deuteronomy 26:12-15).

THE GOSPELS

In the New Testament as well as the Old Testament, the word "righteousness" includes both justice and benevolence.

Jesus begins with the Jewish faith. He calls us to put our trust in God rather than in things, to live a life of gratitude, and to share. Indeed, he calls us to an inward righteousness which does not do its alms in public (Matthew 6:1-4). Jesus teaches that the right use of material things in the service of righteousness can lead to spiritual growth. This is evidently the point of Jesus' poem about God and Money (mammon, Luke 16:10-13). The central point of that poem is in verse eleven (REB):

If, then, you have not proved trustworthy with the wealth of this world, who will trust you with the wealth that is real?'

Jesus calls his disciples to follow him into the reign of God, instead of spending their lives with anxiety about livelihood and possessions (Matthew 6:24-34). Sometimes the words of Jesus have been understood as calling Christians to turn from material things as evil in themselves. Jesus' real point, however, is that the claims of the reign of God take precedence over all other claims:

Set your minds on God's kingdom [reign] and [God's] justice [righteousness], and all the rest will come to you as well.'

- Matthew 6:33 (REB)

Following Jesus takes precedence over possessions, relationships and even our own selves (Matthew 10:37-39, 16:24-26, Luke 9:23-25, 57-62), not because these are of no value (Luke 12:24), but because the reign of God is the all-engaging value of life. The challenge of Jesus to give grows not from an appeal to guilt but from the promise of joy. The rich young ruler "went away with a heavy heart" (Mark 10:22, REB) because he could not accept the truth expressed again in our time by Evelyn Underhill:

We mostly spend [our] lives conjugating three verbs: to Want, to Have, and to Do. Craving, clutching and fussing... we are kept in perpetual unrest: forgetting that none of these verbs have any ultimate significance, except so far as they are transcended by and included in, the fundamental verb, to Be: and that Being, not wanting, having and doing, is the essence of the spiritual life." (The Spiritual Life, p. 24)

This challenge of Jesus to trade everything for the "pearl of great price" (Matthew 13:45-46) is at once a more joyfully carefree and a more costly challenge than tithing or first-fruits giving: it is a challenge to recognize God's claim over all of one's life, relationships, and possessions. The question of how much is to be given away comes after the question of whether we will use all we are and all we have to serve the "reign of God and righteousness."

In the Jewish tradition of righteousness, Jesus' invitation to give was an invitation to "give to the poor." As the beatitudes of Luke (Luke 6:20-26) and the parable of the Great Judgment (Matthew 25:31-46) make clear, there is a special place in the heart of Jesus for the outcast, the rejected, the needy. It is to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24) that he is sent.

The call to righteousness or justice is more than a call to charitable giving. It is a call to do justly, to do right. Jesus invites us into the reign of God. The Church is meant to be a model of that time when "from east and west, from north and south, people will come and take their places at the banquet in the kingdom [reign] of God." (Luke 13:29, REB). That banquet is a symbol of the world in which all have a share at the table. It is a table "of all ages, tongues, and races" (UCC Statement of Faith) and of people from differing social and economic backgrounds.

THE APOSTLE PAUL

When Paul invited the Gentile churches to receive an offering for the Jerusalem poor, he did so in the Jewish heritage which understands righteousness to include benevolence. He ap-

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pealed to these churches on the basis of their "partnership," their "sharing," *koinonia*, the same word that is used of their "communion" at the table of Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 8:4 and 9:13).

Paul's appeal is to the solidarity of Christians throughout the world. Yet elsewhere he appeals for Christians to "work for the good of all" as well as "the household of faith." (Galatians 6:9-10). The reason Paul gives for sharing is not only love but also fairness, as he makes clear in 2 Corinthians 8:12- 15, REB:

If we give eagerly according to our means, that is acceptable to God; [who] does not ask for what we do not have. There is no question of relieving others at the cost of hardship to yourselves; it is a question of equality. At the moment your surplus meets their need, but one day your need may be met from their surplus. The aim is equality; as scripture has it, Those who gathered more did not have too much, and those who gathered less did not have too little.'

Paul's reference in the Corinthian passage is to Exodus 16:18, which describes the gift of "manna," bread from heaven. It reminds us that there is not enough available to supply our desires but there is enough for our needs. In the vision of the Gospel of the reign of God, there is enough to go around, if we share - as the child in the "multitude" shared the five barley loaves and two fish (John 6:1-14). As Mohandas Gandhi once said, the world has enough for everyone's need, but not enough for everyone's greed.

OUR SITUATION

As American Christians, we live in a time when consumerism and trust in technology have to a great extent shaped our lives, often in contrast to the values of the Gospel. We tend to seek meaning in accumulation or in work, while the Christian faith sees material things as a means of service, and work as ministry. We have often measured others (and ourselves) not by who we are but by what we have or represent. Lured by the promises of advertising, we are often caught in the struggle between life as giving and life as getting. When we are at our best, we live by a fuller and broader vision than this, the vision of Jesus for a new world of grace. We have been called by that vision to simplicity, service, and sharing.

This call is the call of God to a spirituality based on grace, gratitude, and compassion. It hears the searching question of Jesus: "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and never do what I tell you?" (Luke 6:46 REB) It understands that growth in grace is coupled with willingness to let God guide and change the way we use and share the resources which God has entrusted to us.

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The sharing to which all Christians, including members of the United Church of Christ, are called as individuals and as families will involve us in community welfare. But "welfare" and "charity" alone are not enough. There are structures in our society which create injury and need. It is the responsibility of Christian people to help rebuild the structures in a more righteous way. We are called to work for economic justice -

for simple fairness. This will involve us as individuals in action and in ministries that address and redress the underlying injustices in our society. It will also involve us in a critical look at the ways in which we invest our own financial resources, as well as the other ways in which our life styles may unwittingly contribute to the injury and need around us.

As individuals and families, we may well examine our lives and our use of resources in a three-fold focus on the stewardship (1) of our work, the use as servants of God of the gifts, abilities, and opportunities that are uniquely ours, (2) of our income, in terms of saving, sharing, and spending, and (3) of our accumulated wealth, in terms of our own futures, the support of those for whom we are responsible, and the support of causes in which we believe. We may well ask ourselves how we understand our own worth and the worth of others, as well as how we understand the meaning of gifts and of deserving. Then we may carefully ask how we employ our resources in the service of God, of others, and of ourselves.

This task is one that challenges and sometimes overwhelms us, as Christians who must live among conflicting values. We need perspective and resources from outside ourselves. That is why the deepening of our stewardship in relation to economic sharing will continue to grow, among other ways, from disciplined prayer and scripture reading, and from faithful participation in the community of faith. Then we will be able to make our decisions about how to live and how to give on the basis of an informed biblical and Christian faith.

The community of faith also has stewardship responsibilities. Since the basic motives for giving in the Jewish and Christian traditions have been gratitude to God and care for others, it is a responsibility of the churches to use the offerings they receive in ways that both worship God and serve others, including particularly those who are disadvantaged or discriminated against — those whom Jesus called "the least of these". The Church as well as the individual is called to follow Christ in ministry.

STATEMENT OF CHRISTIAN CONVICTION

The Eighteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ recognizes that if the Church is to emphasize economic justice in society it should begin with its own household and should also emphasize economic justice, basic fairness, within the Church and within the lives and actions of member Christians. It invites the members of the United Church of Christ to engage in a serious dialogue with each other about Christian stewardship in the midst of the economic realities around us, and to discover the growth in faith that comes from faithful stewardship of all of our life, our resources, and our relationships. Being a steward means living with trust in God's generosity and a responsible tending of that which God has entrusted to us. It also means the fair, just, and righteous sharing of resources with others.

We know that we often struggle with competing values in our lives. We live in a world in which people often seek meaning in the accumulation of possessions, the quest for pleasure, the achievement of status, or even in the pride of service. We are called to find our trust in God and our purpose in the life of service that grows from the gift of God's grace in Jesus Christ. While we willingly and gratefully enjoy the good gifts that God provides, we find our life's meaning in the gift of God's redeeming love for us. We also acknowledge that we are called to share God's gifts with those around us, both in justice and in mercy. Brought through the waters of baptism into the

reign of God, and nourished at the table of Christ where we learn to share, we rejoice for the times in our lives when we have lived in this Way. Sometimes we feel the struggle. Sometimes we know the victory.

Because we desire to live out of the wealth of our faith, we seek to find practical Christian ways of living regarding the use of the wealth of the world. We want not only to educate and be educated about this practical Christian living, but to find ways of personal, family, and congregational living which will lead to changes in behavior and to Christian formation.

We call the members of the United Church of Christ to seek ways of using time in the nurture of our own lives, of those close to us, and of those for whom God calls us to care. We invite the members of the United Church of Christ to use their gifts and abilities in response to God's calling, in service to the needs of the world through the Christian community. We invite them to seek the simplicity which grows from a life of radical trust in God.

Recognizing that all we possess and all that we are is from God and belongs to God, to be used responsibly as God leads us, we further recognize that there are settings in the United Church of Christ where the tithe is a faith response to the grace of God. We affirm the setting aside of a proportionate gift, which may be a tithe, as the beginning of our faith response, and we call attention again to the resolution of the Fourteenth General Synod on Stewardship. In particular, we support an approach to giving based on a percentage of annual income, recalling the words of Jesus (Luke 12:48b, REB) that "Where someone has been given much, much will be expected". We highlight this approach not simply as a mathematical formula but as an application of the principle that as we have been richly blessed, we may more richly respond in giving.

In that same resolution on Stewardship, we call attention to the general guideline which challenges individuals or families to give at least 10 percent of their annual income for the ministry and mission of the Church, and further makes the practical suggestion that, in moving toward this challenge, individuals or families determine the percentage of income represented by their present giving for the ministry and mission of the Church, and then increase it by at least one percentage point each year.

We have referred to and reaffirmed the 1983 General Synod resolution on Stewardship. We do so, however, holding the conviction that the Church itself is called to Christ's ministry in the world, including ministry to the poor and those on the fringes of society, those in "the streets and alleys of the town" (Luke 14:22, REB). If the Church invites its members to give through the Church, then the Church must be doing the work of Christ in the world. The Church must give in order to have the right to ask others to give.

Since it is a part of the mission of the Church to model the challenge which it presents to the individual Christian, we also reaffirm the challenge to each local church to give for Our Church's Wider Mission Basic Support an amount equal to at least 25 percent of its current expenses. We encourage the practical suggestion that each local church move toward this challenge by determining the percentage of current expenses represented by its present giving for Our Church's Wider Mission Basic Support, and then increasing it by at least one percentage point each year.

We believe that the Church of Jesus Christ is called to live out the vision of the reign of God and to provide examples in the world of the new world of grace. Therefore we urge the members of the United Church of Christ to engage in dialogue about our stewardship of this task. We encourage the appropriate national instrumentalities to provide resources to assist in this dialogue.

We encourage local congregations and appropriate national instrumentalities (named in the accompanying Proposal for Action) to call attention to and to create resources which assist in the development of customs and family rituals that reinforce the Christian story and way of life. We urge families themselves to develop such customs and rituals, especially in regard to the Christmas season when the conflicting values of commercialism and Christian faith are especially evident.

We encourage local congregations of the United Church of Christ to enlarge the stewardship of caring for "members of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10). We understand this to include not only spiritual care but also care for the financial needs of members. Such care may well include budget and credit counseling. Congregational concern for personal stewardship could involve discussion among members about such issues as ethical investment and the ethical management of business.

We invite local congregations of the United Church of Christ to see themselves, in the words of Paul, as "working for the good of all" by systematically involving members in active ministries within the community and in the world.

We ask the members of the United Church of Christ to seek solidarity with those whom we serve, "to actively seek out and openly listen to those who are the widow, the orphan and the sojourner of our day" (Seventeenth General Synod Pronouncement "Christian Faith: Economic Life and Justice," Statement of Christian Conviction). Today these include the homeless, the unemployed, those who live on meager or no incomes, and refugees.

We further ask our members to seek more fully to understand and to apply the biblical standards of wholeness and righteousness, including that just sharing which is the result of righteousness. This is "the way that leads to peace." (Luke 19:42, REB).

17. PROPOSAL FOR ACTION "CHRISTIAN FAITH, PERSONAL STEWARDSHIP AND ECONOMIC SHARING"

Ms. Hamelberg introduced Ms. JoAnn Bickford, who instructed the delegates where to look for the Proposal for Action. She pointed out the changes that the committee had made. Ms. Hamelberg then moved that the delegates adopt the Proposal for Action on Christian Faith, Personal Stewardship and Economic Sharing.

Mr. Henry Yordon (CT) moved to amend the Proposal for Action by adding an additional action (#8) to the end of the Proposal. The amendment was "We ask the instrumentalities to act upon the Resolution: "A Call For Specially Responsible Investment" adopted at the 17th General Synod and report their action to the 19th General Synod." After a second to the motion, he spoke to the amendment.

91-GS-51 VOTES: The Eighteenth General Synod adopts the