

1 **RESOLUTION**
2 **AN ECONOMIC JUSTICE COVENANT**

3
4 To the Southern Conference of the United Church of Christ
5
6 From United Church of Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC and
7 the Eastern North Carolina Association of the United Church of Christ
8

9 **BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION**

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11 The Holy Scriptures, from the Pentateuch through the Prophets, and from Jesus to St. Paul
12 impress upon the people of God's Covenant that they are responsible to God for the well being
13 of the last and the least in the human community. Israel and the Church are to feed the hungry,
14 clothe the naked, house the homeless, welcome the stranger and ensure justice for the poor.
15 Amos warned against the excesses of power and wealth:

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17 "Hear this, you that trample on the needy, and bring to ruin
18 the poor of the land, saying, . . . we will make the ephah small
19 and the shekel great, and practice deceit with false balances,
20 buying the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals,
21 and selling the sweepings of the wheat." (Amos 8:4-6)
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23 Jesus of Nazareth proclaimed, taught and inaugurated the Realm of God, a vision of human life
24 and society as God intends it, where all people live in unity and peace because they share in the
25 earth's abundance and treat each other justly. That is the Good News which he preached to the
26 poor who were suffering under the yoke of Roman oppression. It was a society where peace and
27 prosperity for a few were purchased on the backs of the last and the least.
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29 We are baptized into Jesus Christ and are bound together in covenant to Him, to each other and
30 to His vision of a just society. As baptized Christians living in wealthy, prosperous America we
31 find ourselves in a very ambiguous situation. While we enjoy the fruits of our labor and
32 participate in the astonishing economic success of our nation, we are also painfully aware that a
33 substantial portion of our national wealth is gained through a global economic dominance that
34 disadvantages and, in some cases, impoverishes others. It is a global economy that privileges the
35 wealthy at the expense of people of underdeveloped nations and that exploits the earth's
36 resources in a way that is not long sustainable.
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38 As Christians we sing the hymns of justice, equality and unity, we pray for the well being of all
39 God's children, and we continue our activities to feed the hungry and house the homeless. But
40 all the while we watch the gap between rich and poor in our own nation and in the world become
41 ever wider, with many millions left in poverty. Some of the causes are benign, the result of
42 differing natural resources and patterns of cultural development. Some of the causes are the
43 result of the global economy and the incessant desire for corporate profits. But others are simply
44 rapacious; not unlike Amos' searing prophesy: unconscionably low wages, exploitation of
45 workers with no recourse, unfair pricing of many necessities, the luring of poor nations into
46 unbearable debt, and the pillaging of the earth's resources.

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The United Church of Christ and its predecessor church bodies, along with many Christians around the world, has received Christ’s summons to call our churches and our societies toward the blessed vision of God’s Realm, including justice in our economic life.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOVED, that each congregation of the Eastern North Carolina Association of the Southern Conference of the United Church of Christ:

- 1) Begin a focused study of the economic injustices that prevail in our society and our world, and the ways in which we are its beneficiaries;
- 2) Challenge its members to alter their life styles in such a way that all of us are contributing to the ways that make for economic justice, equality and sustainability;
- 3) Adopt “An Economic Justice Covenant,” using the suggested text included in this resolution, or better, utilizing the insights of its own study and the experiences of its members in changing their patterns of living.
- 4) Participate in the formation of public policies and initiatives that move our society toward economic justice, the well being of all people and the care of creation.

A SAMPLE ECONOMIC JUSTICE COVENANT

God blesses the world with abundance, yet so many continue to live in poverty and suffering. We confess that we are participants in this injustice, whether through our actions, or through our complacency. We ask God’s forgiveness for our negligence and self-centeredness.

As witnesses to the grace of God in all of creation, we strive to answer Jesus’ call to work for a world where both mercy and justice prevail, and all share in God’s abundance. Therefore, we, the congregation of _____

Covenant with God and with one another to:

- * Provide service and care for brothers and sisters in need;*
- * Educate ourselves on the root causes of poverty;*
- * Seek long-term ways of empowering the powerless in our community;*
- * Stand against injustices that cause and perpetuate need;*
- * Strive for economic justice in all policies and activities associated with our church;*
- * Encourage and support one another in our own stewardship of God’s earth and its bounty;*
- * Unite with other organizations to address poverty and injustice in the world.*

Recognizing that without God’s help we are inadequate to these tasks, we pray for strength, courage, humility, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit for the work ahead.

93 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution be forwarded to the Southern Conference for
94 consideration at its 2008 Annual Meeting, and to the General Synod of the United Church of
95 Christ for consideration at its 2009 meeting.

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99 ADDENDUM: This Sample Economic Justice Covenant was adopted by the United Church of
100 Chapel Hill, NC, in its Congregational Meeting on May 20, 2007 following an extensive process
101 of study and discussion with all the boards, committees and program groups of the church.
102 Guest speakers and experts in related areas such as housing, health care, education, direct
103 service, living wage and environmental concerns shared their knowledge and perspectives.

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105 Activities initiated in response to this process of study and covenanting, in addition to the many
106 direct service efforts in which our congregation has been engaged for decades, include:
107 organized support for a Living Wage bill in the NC Legislature; the development of an Interfaith
108 Action Network to join with other churches in public policy advocacy; a family oriented Simple
109 Living support group; the development of adult education resources for dissemination; a seminar
110 on effective lobbying and political involvement; participation in protest actions in support of
111 meat packing workers; a commitment to “go green” in the construction of our new church
112 facilities and in refitting our present facilities.

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114 For additional information, contact:
115 The Economic Justice Committee
116 United Church of Chapel Hill
117 1321 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
118 Chapel Hill, NC 27514

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