

1 The Executive Council has recommended this resolution be sent to a committee of the General Synod.  
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## 4 **AN ECONOMIC JUSTICE COVENANT**

5  
6 (A Resolution of Witness)  
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10 **Submitted by:** The Southern Conference  
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15 **Summary:** The Christian faith makes economic justice a priority for the Christian community.  
16 The United Church of Christ has long been an advocate for the poor and a witness for justice in  
17 all areas of life. This resolution asks that the Twenty-seventh General Synod, the national bodies  
18 of the United Church of Christ and its Conferences, Associations and Local Churches to commit  
19 to a covenant of study, witness and action in pursuit of economic justice in our world.  
20

### 21 **BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION**

22 The Holy Scriptures, from the Pentateuch through the Prophets, and from Jesus to St. Paul  
23 impress upon the people of God's Covenant that they are responsible to God for the well being  
24 of the last and the least in the human community. Israel and the Church are to feed the hungry,  
25 clothe the naked, house the homeless, welcome the stranger and ensure justice for the poor.  
26 Amos warned against the excesses of power and wealth:  
27

28 *“Hear this, you that trample on the needy, and bring to ruin*  
29 *the poor of the land, saying, . . . we will make the ephah small*  
30 *and the shekel great, and practice deceit with false balances,*  
31 *buying the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals,*  
32 *and selling the sweepings of the wheat.” (Amos 8:4-6)*  
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34 Jesus of Nazareth proclaimed, taught and inaugurated the Realm of God, a vision of human life  
35 and society as God intends it, where all people live in unity and peace because they share in the  
36 earth's abundance and treat each other justly. That is the Good News which he preached to the  
37 poor who were suffering under the yoke of Roman oppression. It was a society where peace and  
38 prosperity for a few were purchased on the backs of the last and the least.  
39

40 We are baptized into Jesus Christ and are bound together in covenant to Him, to each other and  
41 to His vision of a just society. As baptized Christians living in wealthy, prosperous America, we  
42 find ourselves in a very ambiguous situation. While many of us enjoy the fruits of our labor and  
43 participate in the astonishing economic success of our nation, we are also painfully aware that a  
44 substantial portion of our national wealth is gained through a global economic dominance and in  
45 domestic economic policies that disadvantage and, in some cases, impoverish others. It is a  
46 global economy with national and local components that privileges the wealthy at the expense of

47 people of underdeveloped nations and the poor in our own country, and that exploits the earth's  
48 resources in ways that are not long sustainable.

49  
50 As Christians we sing the hymns of justice, equality and unity, we pray for the well being of all  
51 God's children, and we continue our activities to feed the hungry and house the homeless. But  
52 all the while we watch the gap between rich and poor in our own nation and in the world become  
53 ever wider, with many millions left in poverty. Some of the causes are benign, the result of  
54 differing natural resources and patterns of cultural development. Some of the causes are the  
55 result of the global economy and the incessant desire for corporate profits. Some of the  
56 inequities are the result of longstanding and systemic racism, sexism, and xenophobic fear of the  
57 stranger. Others are simply rapacious, not unlike Amos' searing prophesy: unconscionably low  
58 wages, exploitation of workers with no recourse, unfair pricing of many necessities, the luring of  
59 the poor into unbearable debt, and the pillaging of the earth's resources.

60  
61 The United Church of Christ and its predecessor church bodies, along with many Christians  
62 around the world, have received Christ's summons to call our churches and our societies toward  
63 the blessed vision of God's Realm, including justice in our economic life. Too often Christians  
64 and congregations engage only in works of charity (direct action) without moving into the works  
65 of justice that could reduce the need for charity. Alternately, Christians and congregations focus  
66 solely on justice in the form of advocacy without engaging directly with people in works of  
67 charity. Justice and love cannot be divorced from one another. There cannot be "justice only" or  
68 "charity only" solutions without both suffering. Christians and congregations are called to be  
69 involved in a full spectrum of actions from acts of love to acts of justice.

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71 **THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that each United Church of Christ National Ministry,  
72 Conference, Association and Local Church is encouraged to become an Economic Justice  
73 Church that:

- 74  
75 1) Engages in focused studies of the economic injustices that prevail in our society and our  
76 world, and the ways in which God's abundance is distributed so inequitably;  
77  
78 2) Creates a program of study that may lead that body to draft and adopt an "Economic Justice  
79 Covenant" that reflects the context, experience, study, discernment and commitment to action  
80 of that body (a sample for a Local Church is attached);  
81  
82 3) Develops a range of programs and activities with the goals of inspiring members and  
83 organizing them to engage in actions that promote economic justice. Such programs  
84 encourage members to:  
85  
86 a) work as partners with people in need through service and outreach ministries;  
87  
88 b) adopt sustainable personal and family lifestyles  
89  
90 c) help all families to become economically secure through joint endeavors such as  
91 sponsorship of micro-loans, building of homes with Habitat for Humanity and other  
92 programs that empower people;

93  
94 d) reflect justice in the National Church, Conference, Association or Local Church’s  
95 economic life by offering fair wages and benefits, adopting sustainable practices with its  
96 facilities, and transacting business in a socially just manner;

97  
98 e) advocate for the formation of public policies that move our society toward economic  
99 justice, the well being of all people, and the care of creation;

100  
101 f) unite with other UCC entities, as well as other Christian and non-Christian faith  
102 communities, to create and promote throughout our nation and the world an ethic that values  
103 economic justice for all and the sharing of resources to promote a sustainable common good.  
104

105 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Twenty-seventh General Synod establish a national  
106 Task Force staffed by Justice and Witness Ministries to develop an Economic Justice Covenant  
107 program that fulfills these goals.  
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109 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that Justice and Witness Ministries will be responsible for  
110 developing the strategy and program designed to implement this resolution. The funding for the  
111 implementation of this resolution will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the  
112 affected agencies and the funds available.  
113

114 **FUNDING**

115  
116 Funding for the implementation of this resolution will be made in accordance with the overall  
117 mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.  
118

119 **IMPLEMENTATION**

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121 Justice and Witness Ministries is requested to implement this resolution.  
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126 **ADDENDUM A:**

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128 *A SAMPLE ECONOMIC JUSTICE COVENANT*

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

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

134 *Therefore, we, the congregation (Ministry, Conference, Association) of \_\_\_\_\_,*  
135 *covenant with God and with one another to:*

- 136 • *Provide service and care for brothers and sisters in need;*
- 137 • *Educate ourselves on the root causes of poverty;*
- 138 • *Seek long-term ways of empowering the powerless in our community;*

- 139 • *Stand against injustices that cause and perpetuate need;*
- 140 • *Strive for economic justice in all policies and activities associated with our church*
- 141 *(Ministry, Conference, Association);*
- 142 • *Encourage and support one another in our own stewardship of God's earth and its*
- 143 *bounty;*
- 144 • *Unite with other organizations to address poverty and injustice in the world.*

145  
146 *Recognizing that without God's help we are inadequate to these tasks, we pray for strength,*  
147 *courage, humility, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit for the work ahead.*

148  
149 This sample Economic Justice Covenant was adopted by the United Church of Chapel Hill in its  
150 Congregational Meeting on May 20, 2007, following an extensive process of study and  
151 discussion with all the boards, committees and program groups of the church. Guest speakers  
152 and experts in related areas such as housing, health care, education, direct service, living wage  
153 and environmental concerns shared their knowledge and perspectives. The congregation has  
154 subsequently organized itself to pursue the requirements of this covenant.

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156 **ADDENDUM B:**

157 Activities initiated in response to this process of study and covenanting, in addition to the many  
158 direct service efforts in which our congregation has been engaged for decades, include:  
159 organized support for a Living Wage Bill in the NC Legislature; the development of an Interfaith  
160 Action Network to join with other churches in public policy advocacy; a family oriented Simple  
161 Living support group; the development of adult education resources for dissemination; a seminar  
162 on effective lobbying and political involvement; participation in protest actions in support of  
163 meat packing workers; a commitment to "go green" in the construction of our new church  
164 facilities and in refitting our present facilities.

165  
166 *For additional information, contact:*

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170 Chapel Hill, NC 27514