

## **CHRISTIAN FAITH, PERSONAL STEWARDSHIP AND ECONOMIC SHARING A Pronouncement approved by General Synod XVIII (1991)**

### **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 5:8 (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.

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 our 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 13:5-46) 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 appealed 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 “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.

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 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 the 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 an 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 his 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 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 not 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).

## **PROPOSAL FOR ACTION CHRISTIAN FAITH, PERSONAL STEWARDSHIP AND ECONOMIC SHARING**

### **SUMMARY**

This proposal for Action focuses on the commitment of the United Church of Christ to stewardship and just sharing not only in economic institutions and structures but also in the life of the Church and in the daily lives of members. The Proposal for Action outlines approaches and specific actions by which all parts of the United Church of Christ (individuals and families, local churches, pastors, associations, conferences, instrumentalities, seminaries, and health and human service institutions) may work for stewardship and economic justice.

### **BACKGROUND STATEMENT**

This Proposal for Action is based on the Pronouncement “Christian Faith, Personal Stewardship, and Economic Sharing.” The pronouncement recognizes that if the United Church of Christ emphasizes economic justice in society (as it has done in adopting the pronouncement as well as in the Seventeenth General Synod Pronouncement “Christian Faith: Economic Life and Justice” and in many other resolutions and actions), then the Church should begin with its own household and within the lives and actions of member Christians.

Because the Pronouncement “Christian Faith, Personal Stewardship, and Economic Sharing” is particularly addressed to the “household of faith”, that is, to our own household, it is especially important that the pronouncement be implemented in deeds. These deeds should be implemented in the local church and in the broader councils of the Church, but especially in the lives of the families and individual members of the United Church of Christ.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

The Eighteenth General Synod requests that the Stewardship Council coordinate the implementation of this proposal for action. Where appropriate, it requests the Stewardship Council to consult with other instrumentalities and bodies, such as the Commission for Racial Justice, the Commission on Development, the Coordinating Center for Women, the Office for Church in Society, the Office for Church Life and Leadership, the Pension Boards, the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, the United Church Board for World Ministries, with

other appropriate bodies of the United Church of Christ, with other appropriate bodies of the United Church of Christ, with other communions, and with appropriate ecumenical bodies.

## DIRECTIONAL STATEMENTS AND GOALS

“Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and acts on them ... is like [someone] building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundations on rock.” Luke 6:47-48a, REB

“Suppose a fellow-Christian, whether man or woman, is in rags with not enough food for the day, and one of you says, Good-bye, keep warm, and have a good meal,’ but does nothing to supply their bodily needs, what good is that? So with faith; if it does not lead to action, it is by itself a lifeless thing.” James 2:15-17, REB

“So also, if you are not prepared to leave all your possessions behind, you cannot be my disciples.” Luke 14:33, REB

## COVENANT OF THE DELEGATES

The delegates assembled at the Eighteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ covenant with each other to circulate the Pronouncement “Christian Faith, Personal Stewardship, and Economic Sharing” in our own congregations, associations, and conferences. We also promise to work toward the implementation of this proposal for action in our own personal lives, families, congregations, associations, and conferences. We will seek to study these documents and to understand how they may affect our own lives.

## CALL TO MEMBERS

The Eighteenth General Synod calls the members of the United Church of Christ to faithful stewardship and just economic sharing. We suggest the following ways of doing this:

1. Seek to understand more fully the meaning of stewardship and economic sharing by study of the Bible and of Christian faith, especially in relation to the issues of creation, ownership, money, power, partnership, sharing, giving, peace, righteousness, and economic justice. Through prayer, self-examination, and dialogue with other church members, seek ways to live out these new insights in practice. Find others beyond your local church who have different backgrounds and attitudes. Begin to understand their viewpoints and their needs. Make an effort to get to know people of different racial, political, and economic backgrounds, including those who have been victims of economic injustice.
2. Examine your personal and family finances. Do systematic family budgeting based on responsible Christian decisions about the fair management of resources, balancing care for your family and household with prudent and faithful preparation for the future, and with giving for the mission of the Church and the needs of others. Give consideration to the principles of “first fruits” giving and of proportional giving in response to God’s blessings, in particular the goal of giving at least 10 percent of annual income for the ministry and mission of the Church, and of moving toward this challenge by determining

the percentage of your present giving and increasing it by at least one percentage point each year.

3. Examine your personal and family lifestyle. Change your lifestyle where it needs to be simplified and become more consistent with a life based on trust in God rather than on trust in possessions and status. Teach your children and young people the values and actions of Christian stewardship and just economic sharing. This will include guiding them in the management of their personal resources. Call attention in your family or household to the conflicting values of consumerism and Christian discipleship, especially in regard to the techniques of television and other media advertising. Find ways of making the Christian heritage clear in the customs of your family or household. This may include emphasizing giving rather than getting and discovering ways of giving without letting others know of your gifts.
4. Look at your patterns of work and leisure. Evaluate your use of work and leisure, seeking health and wholeness in the light of God's will for our good and for our service to God and others. Consider God's gifts to you and your use of these gifts. Ask what it means to live a fulfilled life that is both grateful and responsible.
5. Look at the ways you invest your resources and the impact those investments may have for peace, justice, and the wholeness of the environment. Look at the ethics of the way you do business in the light of Christian principles.
6. Increase your actions in community, national, and global service. Cooperate in projects that improve and make more just and sharing the economic structures of our society. This may include both action to feed, clothe, house, and care for the victims of injustice and action to bring about social changes that help to remedy the causes of injustice.
7. Seek to develop a lifestyle that finds happiness in fulfillment and service rather than in the acquisition of new things. Seek to live in a way that is both environmentally responsible and provides resources for sharing with those in need.
8. We ask the instrumentalities to act upon the Resolution "A Call For Socially Responsible Investment" adopted by the Seventeenth General Synod and report their action to the Nineteenth General Synod.

#### CALL TO LOCAL CHURCH LEADERS

The Eighteenth General Synod calls the leaders of local churches to support their members in study and action toward further development of a Christian stewardship lifestyle in the use and sharing of economic resources by:

1. Providing opportunity, through worship, classes, study groups, and other means of teaching and of dialogue, for members to consider their Christian faith and personal stewardship in the use and sharing of resources, including budgeting, investment, benevolent giving, and the conduct of business;

2. Developing, creating, and sharing ecumenically resources for family and congregational customs which emphasize the Christian heritage and way of life as stewards;
3. Recommending the study and practice of “first fruits” giving and of proportional giving for the support of the Church and its work of mission and service, including the suggestion that members accept the goal of giving at least ten percent of their annual income for the work and mission of the Church, moving toward this goal by determining the percentage of income represented by that member’s present giving and then increasing it by at least one percentage point each year;
4. Encouraging estate planning and the stewardship of accumulated assets through sound financial methods of gifts, bequests, and investment, and challenging the local church and its leadership to engage in the study of the most faithful ways of using these assets without adversely affecting the call to obedient, individual giving.
5. Reaffirming as congregations the General Synod goal of giving to Our Church’s Wider Mission Basic Support an amount equal to at least twenty five percent of current local church expenses; moving toward this goal by determining the percentage of current expenses represented by the congregation’s present giving to Our Church’s Wider Mission Basic Support, and then increasing it by at least one percentage point each year.
6. Providing budget and credit counseling as part of a broader pastoral concern for the spiritual and economic well-being of members;
7. Surveying the community where the church is located and becoming acquainted with the church’s neighbors, including other congregations and faith communities; seeking out, as well as possible in the wider community, people of differing ethnic, social, and economic status, and arranging programs whereby members of the congregation may understand and engage with others in conversations on issues of economic justice. This may involve entering into paired relationships with other congregations.
8. Enlisting all members systematically in areas of service to the community and world as well as in the nurturing and enabling tasks of the congregation; providing opportunities for members of the congregation to participate in networks and programs for justice, fairness, and sharing such as: Impact, Interfaith Action for Economic Justice, the Justice and Peace Network of the United Church of Christ, and the Network for Environmental and Economic Responsibility; and service opportunities through the Board for Homeland Ministries and the Board for World Ministries.
9. Examining the financial stewardship of the congregation, including its employment practices, and the use of the church’s resources to further economic sharing and justice. Suggestions for such an examination are contained in the Proposal for Action “Christian Faith: Economic Life and Justice,” adopted by Seventeenth General Synod, Section V, “Call to Local Churches,” paragraph 3, “An Economic Audit of the Church”, and in the Seventeenth General Synod Resolution “A Call for Socially Responsible Investment.”



## CALL TO PASTORS

Aware of the crucial role pastors play in shaping the life and goals of local churches, the Eighteenth General Synod calls and encourages the pastors of the United Church of Christ to lead their congregations into proportional and just Christian stewardship life styles by:

1. Giving specific attention to their own life and practice as stewards of their resources before God, including their stewardship of giving, and to the power that money and possessions play in their own lives;
2. Preaching and teaching on the themes of creation, ownership, stewardship, money, power, partnership, sharing,. Giving, economic justice, peace, righteousness, mission, service, the reign of God, and ethical standards for the conduct of business;
3. Recognizing that the pastoral office includes concern both for the spiritual and material well-being of the congregation;
4. Embracing in their pastoral care a concern for the economic well-being of parishioners, including their stewardship of financial resources; providing resources and referral for parishioners in need of budget and credit counseling;
5. Leading their congregations to institute programs of wills and estate planning and of planned giving; and setting examples of such programs in their own actions;
6. Challenging their congregations in the examination of each congregation's financial stewardship, including its support of Our Church's Wider Mission Basic Support and Special Support, and its support of human service ministries;
7. Becoming involved in service to their communities and leading their congregations in interfaith community involvement and in ministries of service to the community, seeking to assure that every member's talents, interests, and commitments are fully enlisted in the work of mission.

## CALL TO UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST ASSOCIATIONS AND CONFERENCES

The eighteenth General Synod calls the associations and conferences of the United Church of Christ to emphasize the importance of a stewardship lifestyle which relates Christian faith to economic sharing through:

1. Setting an example in the support of the mission programs of the associations and conferences and in support for the mission and work of the United Church of Christ through emphasis upon and increased giving toward Our Church's Wider Mission Basic Support;
2. Highlighting the activities of the churches, associations, and conferences in ministry and mission to human need and for just and righteous sharing of resources;

3. Providing workshops, retreats, and training programs in the areas of stewardship education, financial development, planned giving, spiritual growth, and just economic sharing;

## CALL TO UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST INSTRUMENTALITIES, SEMINARIES, AND HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICE INSTITUTIONS

The Eighteenth General Synod calls the instrumentalities, seminaries, and health and human service institutions related to the United Church of Christ to provide leadership in the development of personal Christian stewardship and economic sharing.

1. We ask the Stewardship Council to continue to develop and promote study materials (including materials developed ecumenically such as “Guidelines for Sharing” from the El Escorial Consultation) around the themes of Christian Faith, Personal Stewardship, and Economic Sharing for use in the local churches of the United Church of Christ.

These materials should encourage wide conversation in the Church about the meaning of stewardship and economic sharing. We encourage the Stewardship Council to continue to develop materials in the areas of stewardship education, mission interpretation, and financial development in the support of the Church’s mission, materials which are faithful to the biblical foundations of our Christian faith and which relate the appeal of the Church to Christian discipleship and a care for the needs of others.

2. We ask the Stewardship Council to continue to develop and promote resources (including resources developed ecumenically) for family budget development in the light of Christian faith, and to develop and promote resources prompting ethical decisions in relation to business actions and investments. These resources should include the training of leaders and teachers in these areas and the resourcing of conference stewardship programs.
3. We ask the Stewardship Council to coordinate its implementation of this proposal for action and of the Pronouncement “Christian Faith, Personal Stewardship, and Economic Sharing” with the implementation of the Pronouncement and Proposal for Action “Christian Faith: Economic Life and Justice.”
4. We ask the appropriate United Church of Christ instrumentalities, including the Stewardship Council, the Board for World Ministries, the Board for Homeland Ministries, the Office for Church Life and Leadership, and the Coordinating Center for Women to collect or develop and distribute study resources, curricula, worship, and devotional materials which encourage a Christian lifestyle in the light of Christian faith, personal stewardship, and the responsibilities of just economic sharing. We especially encourage the development of curriculum and worship resources for all ages which contribute to the formation of Christian lives and values, understanding that Christians are called to live by a different standard. We also encourage the development of devotional and study resources for all ages which deal with the themes of spiritual growth, simplicity of living,

the relationship of work and leisure, and the relationship between the gifts we have received from God and the gifts we have to share.

5. We encourage the work of the Commission on Development in emphasizing the Christian commitment of accumulated assets to the Church and other causes on the basis of faith in God and of just and charitable sharing.
6. We ask the seminaries related to the United Church of Christ to include in their instruction courses in the theory and practice of stewardship, and in the meaning and use of money and possessions in relation to issues of sharing and justice and practical training in the envisioning, formation, and implementation of local mission projects. We encourage the inclusion in programs of spiritual formation of practical disciplines regarding the use of money and possessions.
7. We encourage the health and human service institutions related to the United Church of Christ in the inclusion in their programs of an emphasis upon the wise stewardship of life, health, and possessions in the light of Christian values.

#### IMPLEMENTING BODY

The Stewardship Council shall be the implementing body responsible to develop the strategy and program of the above directional statements and goals, in consultation with other appropriate bodies.

Subject to the availability of funds.