

CONCERNING NATIONAL PRIORITIES
A Resolution Approved by GS XVIII (1991)

Theological Rationale

As stated in both the 1988 Illinois Conference “Just Peace” Pronouncement and resolution on “Christian Faith and Economic Life,” it is the biblical sense that God calls Christians to seek the well-being of those victimized by poverty, injustice, and violence by engaging in sacrificial acts of mercy and justice (Deut. 15:11, Jer. 21:12, Micah 6:6-8, Psalm 72, Matt. 5:9, 23:23 and 25:31-46, Luke 4:18-19, James 2:15-16, etc.) Such actions are to go beyond mere works of “charity” and to include efforts that influence institutions and governments to structure society as to establish and ensure economic justice and peace.

This is an age in which military spending and activities world-wide has oppressed rich and poor nations alike into deeper indebtedness and strengthened their reliance on violence to secure political and national objectives. The churches of Eastern Europe have shown a leading role in changing the structures of their own oppressive governments to provide better socio-economic conditions and democratic opportunities for their people. It is no less necessary for Christians in already democratic nations, with much less risk of violence, to press our own governments to reorder our national priorities toward a common global and national security based on economic justice for all and to reduce significantly our dependence on military spending.

At the very least it is requisite that Christians seek together a deepened understanding — through prayer, biblical study and theological reflection — of what God is calling us to do in this time of immense social injustice and violence both at home and abroad. Such communion with each other and the Holy Spirit must, however, lead to actions that “let justice roll down like waters’ (Amos 5:24); otherwise we risk the guilt of the Pharisees whom Jesus charged with having “neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith’ (Mt. 23:23-24). As Jesus himself was unafraid to challenge the religio-political structures of his own people — sabbath laws and table fellowship sanctions that denied well-being to the poor and oppressed — so we must not hesitate to witness to our faith that “those who oppress poor people ... insult the God who made them” (Prov. 14:31). For those privileged to dwell in a land of democratic rule, it is our responsibility as “the people” who govern themselves to see that our faith expresses itself to ensure “that justice is done every day” (Jer. 21:12). These convictions lead us to respond with the following resolution.

WHEREAS, our biblical faith and Christian heritage resound with God’s call for justice and peace;

WHEREAS, General Synod over the years has shown deep concern and committed itself to efforts for justice and peace (CS15 “Affirming the UCC as a Just Peace Church & GS 17 “Christian, Faith, Economic Life and Justice);

WHEREAS, justice and peace are impacted directly by a national priority of military strength and spending;

WHEREAS, common global security for all God's people is based not only on legitimate defense measures but also on all people having an opportunity to meet their basic needs for food, shelter, health care, education and work with dignity; to live in a safe and healthful environment; and to enjoy human rights, including the right to participate in decisions affecting their lives;

WHEREAS, Christians in the United States have a fundamental right and responsibility to convey to their elected representatives their faith that God does call nations and governments to seek and do justice through peaceful means, so that all persons share equitably both in a common security and in the abundance of God's creation;

WHEREAS, it is the right and responsibility of United States citizens to petition their government with regard to the priorities on which they wish their tax dollars to be spent;

WHEREAS, U.S. military spending has roughly doubled in the last decade, thus deepening the U.S. debt and causing urgent and continuing societal needs to go unmet or to be unfunded;

WHEREAS, immense changes in international relationships are creating opportunities for significant military reductions;

WHEREAS, substantial and continuing reductions in military funding would demonstrate the U.S. to resolve to reduce the world's reliance on the military especially if a company, redirects its resources to peaceful efforts towards overcoming hunger, poverty and meeting basic human needs at home and abroad.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Eighteenth General Synod of the United Church urges its members, churches, associations, conferences, national bodies and related institutions:

to examine their responsibilities as Christians toward furthering economic justice, peace, human wholeness and well-being as central aspects of God's promised shalom, through prayers, biblical study, and theological reflection in relation to contemporary realities and economic injustice and violence, utilizing the Fifteenth General Synod Pronouncement "Affirming the UCC AS A Just Peace Church" and Seventeenth General Synod Pronouncement "Christian Faith, Economic Life and Justice" as resources for study and reflection; and

to petition the United States Congress and President to demonstrate a reordering of U.S. national priorities by:

establishing as the primary U.S. foreign and domestic policy objective the fostering of a common global security based on economic justice;

encouraging peaceful settlement of conflicts through regional and international negotiations;

reducing overall military spending substantially each year over the next five years, allocating the savings toward increasing support for domestic programs that address

human needs. These needs include aiding military personnel, military-related industries and their employees to convert to productive non-defense work that will provide employment opportunity for workers displaced by these changes;

working together, particularly in the economic arena, to overcome hunger and poverty, to reduce debt burdens, to promote human rights and people's participation in political decisions affecting them, to ensue sustainable development.

Background

Why do We Need New National Priorities?

During the last decade, federal economic and social programs were drastically reduced while military spending increased to produce the enormous federal deficit we have today. State and local governments picked up some of this responsibility while the federal budget went increasingly to military expenditure and debt service on military expenditures. Illinois lost \$7.8 billion between 1981 and 1989. Now we are faced with drastic budget cuts in state social programs.

For Instance:

Consider a few comparisons of military spending to our Governor's current proposed cuts in the Illinois budget:

Optional medical services eliminated No crutches No wheelchairs No dental work No eyeglasses No hospice care No foot care	1,091,582 people affected; 420,633 working poor & 670,949 on Aid to Families with Dependent Children	\$82 Million	Operation of one aircraft carrier for 5 months
Unemployed single adults cut off General Assistance after 6 months. They currently receive \$165 per month.	101,000 people affected	\$139 Million	The Tomahawk missiles exploded in 1 st week of Gulf War (100+ at \$1.35 million each.)
Eliminate Residential Energy Assistance Program	221,000 households affected	\$48 Million	Four nuclear tests
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 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