

WISC Prayer Vigil for a Just and Compassionate Budget
Thursday July 14, 2011

Leader: God in the Spirit calls us by grace to be renewed in the image of our Creator, that we may be one in divine love for the world.

Leader: Today is the day God cares for the integrity of creation, wills the healing and wholeness of all life, weeps at the plunder of earth's goodness.

All: *And so shall we*

Leader: Today is the day God embraces all hues of humanity, delights in diversity and difference, favors solidarity transforming strangers into friends.

All: *And so shall we*

Leader: Today is the day God cries with the masses of starving people, despises growing disparity between rich and poor, demands justice for workers in the marketplace.

All: *And so shall we*

Leader: Today is the day God deplores violence in our homes and streets, rebukes the world's warring madness, humbles the powerful and lifts up the lowly.

All: *And so shall we*

Leader: Today is the day God calls for nations and peoples to live in peace, celebrates where justice and mercy embrace, exults when the wolf grazes with the lamb.

All: *And so shall we*

All: *Today is the day God brings good news to the poor, proclaims release to the captives, gives sight to the blind and sets the oppressed free. And so shall we.*

Prayer: Loving and compassionate God, today we are indeed called to bring good news to the poor – to stand with those whose cries too often go unheard in the halls of power. Together we pray that justice and compassion might enter into the hearts and minds of our elected leaders.

God you have entrusted to our care an amazing and abundant creation. Help us to challenge those who peddle notions of false scarcity, pitting neighbor against neighbor, and who worship at the altar of individualism that is contrary to your call for community.

Instead give us courage to embrace your economy of abundance and strive for a just community where all have the opportunity to live fully into their potential and share in the plenty that you have provided.

Prayers of the people:

Leader: Our nation's budget is a testament to our shared priorities – showing clearly who and what we value as a people. We recognize and affirm the vital role of governments in ordering society and enabling us to do together that which none of us could do alone. The burdens and benefits of our common life together must be shared among us and our laws must serve to overcome inequalities not institutionalize them.

Too often the conversations around budget decisions focus on programs and numbers. And yet we know that connected to the programs are people and behind the numbers are the names of our brothers and sisters – beloved children of God.

Today we pause to lift up before God those who would be hurt most by proposals to further tear at our social safety net while shielding the wealthiest in our nation from any additional sacrifice.

For all those who hunger, we pray:

God we give thanks for the work and ministry of our brothers and sisters who give food to those who hunger. We also give thanks for hands and hearts of those whom you have moved to enact programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and other vital anti-hunger programs which help keep over 40 million people in the United States from going hungry.

For all those who seek employment, we pray:

God we lift to your care the millions of our brothers and sisters who are unemployed and under-employed. You know the names of each of the 14.1 million of our brothers and sisters who are looking for work. Today we especially ask that you give comfort and strength to the 6.3 million who have been unemployed for 27 weeks or more and pray our elected leaders will take action to alleviate their suffering.

For all those who are suffering illness, we pray:

God we ask that your healing presence be with those whose health is ailing. We give thanks for doctors, nurses, family members, and all who comfort the sick. We pray that our elected leaders will have courage to protect critical health programs such as Medicaid from budget cuts and strengthen global efforts to eradicate pandemic diseases such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.

For all children, we pray:

God we grieve the fact that every 32 seconds a child is born into poverty in the United States. Help us remain vigilant in our efforts to secure a safe and healthy future for all your children.

For all those struggling with poverty, we pray:

God we have so mismanaged your great abundance that we now live in a world where over 1.4 billion of our global neighbors live in extreme poverty. Help our elected leaders construct pathways to shared prosperity where all your children can live lives of dignity and hope.

All: Gracious and merciful God hear our prayers. We know that you are already at work in the places of deep suffering in this world. Strengthen our courage – and the courage of our elected leaders – to meet you there and join in creating the just world you envision. May the budget decisions being made reflect the particular concern you show for those on the margins of society – placing them at the center of our shared vision for a just and compassionate budget. Amen.