

A SOCIAL STATEMENT ON HORIZONS FOR THE REIGN OF GOD: DISCERNING THE PATH OF SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL ECONOMICS

Approved at the Sixth Biennial Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
July 23-27, 1997

The Church, as the community of God's people in the world, has a vision of the Creator's intention for the global human family. It may be a vision seen dimly and only partially, but it is a view that places a priority on the dignity of humanity as those who are made in God's image. It is a vision that stands in contrast to the principalities and powers of this world. It is a vision that continually needs to return to the apostolic witness of God's saving action in Jesus Christ. It is a vision, guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit, that equips the people of God for their service in the world.

The pace and magnitude of change are reshaping human communities and the arena of the Church's witness and mission. God calls the Church as a community of faith to bear witness to the Creator's redemptive intention for the human family. Faith in Jesus Christ calls disciples to a mission in the world. It is fitting that members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada declare their commitment to the vision of God's reign of justice for the world.

The Church has profound moral and ethical contributions to make to the discussion about our economic, political, and social future. In a world that seems to devalue human life, the Church calls for the sanctity of life and the necessity to live life in community. In a world that fosters a sense of meaninglessness for human existence, the Church calls people to a vocation that contributes to the common good. In a world that would propose an economics of scarcity, the Church proclaims that God offers an economy that is sufficient for the needs of all.

This social statement has been developed in the tradition of previous statements of both The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada (ELCC) and the Lutheran Church in America.

SECTION I THE CURRENT GLOBAL DYNAMICS OF CHANGE

The global human family is facing unprecedented opportunities as the world approaches the twenty-first century. Many of the life threatening diseases and destructive trends of the past are being addressed and overcome. The threat of global destruction from nuclear war has been reduced. Food production has increased as well as the overall wealth of the global human community. Improvements in transportation have enabled people to experience different cultures, and even to explore the depths of space. Information technologies have enabled new forms of global communication and the expansion of the body of human knowledge. New medicines and treatment technologies have been developed to address what were once incurable diseases. Science has unraveled some of the mysteries of life itself and developed the power to engineer genetically the basic building blocks of life. These developments and others have enhanced in varying degrees the quality of life.

Conversely, the many changes that have reshaped the global community have also led to some global dynamics that raise profound ethical questions about our economic life. These dynamics have also had an impact on how communities have used the common wealth entrusted to them. Among these dynamics has been the globalization of national and regional economies, the persistence of militarism and the rise of nationalism, the emergence of a single global culture, and the perilous approach of an ecological crisis resulting from human activity.

I.A. The Globalization of Economies

Increasingly the arena of economic activity has become the global market. With improved transportation, information and communication, financial capital, goods and services can be moved relatively easily and quickly over vast distances and into different contexts. Regional and national geographic markets are no longer

a limiting factor. As a consequence, global competition is an imperative driving what producers receive for their goods or services.

Leading these changes have been transnational corporations (TNC's). The number of these corporations has increased exponentially in the last twenty years. Many of these corporations are now larger than many national economies. The largest transnational corporations control sizeable amounts of international trade, with about seventy percent of international trade being conducted within corporations. While some have moved beyond the traditional objectives of increased profit and corporate growth to include issues of social responsibility, the majority have not. These transnational corporations now constitute the major community of interest in the international arena. For many, *globalization* has been synonymous with unrestricted economic activity of transnational corporations.ⁱ

One result has been that while capital, goods and some services are globally mobile, labour cannot move as easily. As a result, workers have found they have been forced to compete for jobs with workforces in other locations and countries. This has resulted in increased unemployment and, what some have described as, a *race to the bottom* with respect to wages and salaries for workers.

The mobility of capital has had other economic consequences. The volatility of the trillions of dollars circulating in international markets can have a destabilizing impact on local and national economies. When decisions are made suddenly to move vast amounts of money or facilities from one jurisdiction to another, a destabilizing impact on governments and communities are often the result.

Another facet of this globalization of the economy is the limits placed on national governments in the management of their economies and, consequently, on their citizens to participate in making collective choices about their future. As larger economic unions have emerged to create larger markets and increased demand, national governments have been expected to surrender decision-making powers for the management of their fiscal and monetary policies. Taxes must be harmonized, often disproportionately with the jurisdictions of trading partners. Interest rates are determined not by the monetary requirements of the economy, but by international investor confidence and bond rating agencies. Globalization, while facilitating international trade and overall economic growth, does create problems for communities that in turn have economic, social and political consequences for the well being of people.

I.B. The Persistence of Militarism and Growing Nationalism

With the end of the Cold War, people anticipated an era of peace with a peace dividend due to decreased military spending. But the residue of war continues to plague the human community. Worldwide, there continue to be seventy-five armed conflicts, mainly in poor nations.ⁱⁱ These conflicts, as well as incurring a horrible human toll in death and injury, displace people and destroy the productive capacity of local economies.

Military spending, the trade in military arms, and the production of military equipment continue to undermine security and divert resources away from providing for human needs. The United Nations estimates that 12% of the global military spending would provide primary health care for all, ensure safe drinking water, eliminate severe malnutrition and cut moderate malnutrition by 50%. The United Nations also estimates that reducing military spending by 4% could reduce adult illiteracy by half and ensure primary education for all people.ⁱⁱⁱ Clearly, militarism and the trade in arms have a major detrimental impact globally on economic and community life. More specifically, it also has a detrimental effect on industrialized economies by failing to increase the wealth within those communities.

The end of the Cold War and a world order based upon a super-power counterbalance unleashed the aspirations of a wide range of nationalist groups. These groups may exist within or transcend the boundaries of conventional nation states. The aspirations of these national groups, which share a prior history and culture with the nation state in which they find themselves, ensue from a belief that an existing nation state can no longer ensure the security, cultural identity and economic well-being of their particular community. The choice is to develop an alternative to the existing nation state either through peaceful or violent means. Clearly, the rapid rise in the number of independence movements and the number of armed conflicts within existing nation states indicates the scope of this global dynamic.^{iv}

I.C. The Crisis of Ecological Limits

Not only can people know almost instantaneously about events in other parts of the world, but the impact of actions taken in one part of the world have direct consequences in other parts of the world. For example, the over-consumption of fossil fuels in countries in the north has implications for the ozone layer and global warming. The deforestation of tropical forests in the south has implications for people in northern countries. The global human community is fast approaching ecological limits. It is no longer possible to assume that economic activity can be undertaken without considering the costs to the environment. The United Nations' Commission on Environment and Development has described this new approach as "sustainable development." Still others have called for an even more profound recognition of the environmental consequences.

I.D. The Emergence of a Single Global Consumer Culture

With the advent of new information technologies, increased trade and urbanization, a single global consumer culture is emerging. This is true in both rich and poor nations. For example, many private and national television broadcasters find it less expensive to use programs from rich countries.

Even the poorest households now have televisions. Television serves to promote higher expectations. The life style to which people aspire is a western European consumer life style as portrayed in the sitcoms and movies. As well, there is increasing global interdependence of news reporting. North American and European news are broadcast via satellite to even the remotest regions of the globe, and it is often easier for media outlets to rely on a feed from these networks than to offer a regional interpretation of events. Advertising and marketing have served to broaden the range of foods, goods, and services people want.

While there has been a cultural exchange between north and south, the ability to maintain and preserve culture identity is not equally balanced. Often the language of exchange is English. Increasingly in an information age, culture has become a major business and yet another commodity in the global marketplace. With the evolution of one global monoculture, trade agreements further this tendency and thereby are undermining many cultures.

SECTION II ETHICAL QUESTIONS FOR OUR SOCIAL FUTURE

These dynamics have real economic consequences for communities. Increasingly, people are struck by the recognition that the conventional economic prescriptions and policies do not remedy the problems facing communities. For many people, the pursuit of these policies has made the quality of life worse. It appears that the social and economic problems are resistant -- or worse, even immune -- to traditional social and economic policy responses.

The failures of traditional policy choices are pointed out to us daily as we see the consequences of increased hunger, continuing poverty, increasing unemployment, and other symptoms. These symptoms remind us of the power of human sin and its insidious ability to alienate us not only from God, but from our global neighbour as well. They also remind us of the collective power of sin through our social sin of developing systems that exclude and marginalize people.

But these symptoms also provide hope. They help reveal to us the fundamental contradictions and paradoxes that demand our response as disciples. These contradictions point us to challenging ethical questions and moral tensions that communities must address as they organize economic life. Among these contradictions are the following:

II.A. The Economic Paradox

There are numerous contradictions in our economic system. While the Canadian economy has become more efficient and labour productivity has increased, the share enjoyed by workers has not increased. Median incomes for families have been declining. In the face of an expanding Gross National Product driven by

stronger levels of exports, Canada hovers close to double-digit levels of unemployment, and underemployment is a growing problem.

Canadians have seen companies downsize their workforces and eliminate full time employment to increase their profits. In theory, increased profits were assumed to provide the basis for investment, which would in turn increase employment. In extreme cases, it is more profitable for investment fund managers or financial departments of transnational corporations to speculate in money markets, producing nothing nor creating any employment, but still returning a profit to their shareholders.

Technological innovations have greatly increased productive efficiencies in some manufacturing and service industries. But increased efficiency due to technology has also led to a decreased demand for labour. The result is that as businesses become more efficient, fewer people are needed to do the actual work, leading to what some have termed the “jobless future.”

While both global production and the overall wealth of the human family have increased, there are an increasing number of people who are poor, and the gulf between rich and poor is widening. While global food production has increased, food insecurity is a major concern in many poorer nations. Indebted poor nations now pay back more in debt service to rich nations than all the aid, loans and trade credits they receive. At the same time, the levels of official development aid from richer nations are being continually reduced.

The ethical question we face is how we can organize the production and distribution of the common wealth of God’s creation in ways that ensure sufficiency for all people in the global community.

II.B The Political Paradox

While democracy is emerging in many countries, there seems to be decreasing confidence in those who are in positions of elected authority. Many people no longer have confidence in a role for government involvement in economic life. Increasingly, arguments are made for further privatization of public services and deregulation of markets. Those who oppose these directions are labeled as special interest groups.

Within the international economy, there has been an increasing role for economic institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (now the World Trade Organization). The World Bank and the IMF have become ever more intrusive into national economies in support of structural economic changes to ensure free market dynamics. The World Trade Organization, while not directly involved in national economies, sets many of the rules governing investment and areas such as intellectual property rights, thereby limiting what policy choices nation states can make.

Other economic organizations are also emerging that govern the newly created trade agreements, such as the European Commission, that administers the European Union, and the NAFTA Secretariat. The expanded role of international trade and the international economy in domestic economic life has resulted in increased influence of these organizations. However, such organizations are removed from a political process that enables public participation and review of their decisions, which further erodes confidence in political processes for economic management.

The consequences of the failing confidence have led to decreasing levels of voter participation in the elections of democratic societies. It has resulted in increased defiance and cynicism by the electorate. In some countries it has meant a lack of respect for basic civil and political rights. The ethical question arising is how to ensure informed participation by people in collective choices, without fear, and in the interests of their community.

II.C. The Social Paradox

In the face of difficult economic times, the viability of social programs, or social safety nets, intended to protect people from poverty and hardship, has been called into question. In more affluent nations, these programs have been accused of being too generous, the cause of government deficits, and therefore not affordable due to limited government funds. This is contrary to research demonstrating that in Canada; for example, there has not been a dramatic increase in social spending as a percentage of the Gross National Product (or GNP).

The effectiveness of such programs has also been called into question by those receiving benefits, who have felt trapped by a safety net in an economic system that seems incapable of providing employment at a living wage. The double indignity is that those within the system are held personally responsible for their dependence on the system of social programs. In short, we blame the poor for being poor and the unemployed for being unemployed. This is further reflected in society's increasing willingness to see other social problems such as increasing crime, the problem of illicit drugs, the rise in racism, violence within families, and growing inequality, as the result of a lack of character and a failure to accept personal responsibility as individuals. Such views do not take seriously our social responsibility; nor do they consider that these problems are also, in part, the result of creating a social context that excludes people.

Internationally, the contradiction is different. Many poorer nations followed the recommendations of industrialized countries and borrowed money to pursue large-scale development programs. For the most part, these were not successful in increasing the well being of average people. In many cases, monies were directed for other purposes such as increasing the size of the military. Now, in the face of such debts, many poorer nations have been forced to cut public spending on fulfilling their social responsibilities through health, education, and food programs. These cuts come mainly in the form of the *structural adjustment programs* (SAPS) recommended by the International Monetary Fund, which require compliance in order to maintain a poor nation's access to credit. Recently, such institutions have begun to recommend minimal social programs. For people in these poorer nations, they see so-called *social safety nets* as a means by which richer nations can placate their conscience. After forcing poor countries to devastate their social infrastructure, safety nets are offered as a minimal response to the human needs resulting from the imposition on them of these austere economic policies. Many poor nations resent the moral contradiction these programs represent.

Ironically, at a time when we have great potential for improved health, communities are faced with unemployed doctors, nurses and health care providers. Similarly, while knowledge is considered essential for social economic participation, there continue to be reductions in support for education in the northern countries. In the poorer southern countries, public education continues to experience reduced funding and restrictions to access. The contradiction is striking between what is needed for a better future and what governments are, in practice, prepared to support.

In spite of predictions for increased leisure time, people find they no longer have time for family or community life. At the same time as there are calls for the increased use of volunteers, the continued existence of many voluntary social organizations is threatened. This is occurring at a time when their services and ideas are most needed. Many leaders see the role of voluntary and religious groups solely as a way to replace direct services that were formerly undertaken by governments. However, such organizations also need to be seen as *public interest groups* that have ideas for policies and programs that contribute to the common good of the community.

How can we fulfill our responsibilities for ensuring the well being of families, neighbourhoods, and communities? How do we give adequate attention to developing and nurturing the necessary social infrastructure that enriches our communities? These questions require more attention and social imagination.

II.D. The Ecological Paradox

In response to the challenges of poverty and unemployment, the prescriptions being offered are supposed to foster increased economic growth and consumption, and thereby, more employment. Such a direction will require an even greater use of resources and place further demands upon the biosphere at a time when most people have recognized that creation is fast approaching real ecological limits. In moving beyond these ecological thresholds, humanity will cause irreparable damage to the biosphere.

While those in positions of responsibility profess a concern for the environment, many policies currently being implemented clearly move us away from public responsibility and appropriate regulation in order to privatize the economic benefits. Such moves often permit the exploitation of the environment while increasing the public's risks and liability. Most notable among these examples is the decision to allow private corporations to

develop, patent and maintain ownership of actual life forms and seed varieties. This will have far reaching consequences for future generations and the biodiversity of the planet.

Clearly, the ethical challenge is to consider how we can meet present needs while preserving creation for future generations.

SECTION III BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL GUIDEPOSTS

The biblical material does not provide a detailed blueprint for the organizational structure society should follow in its economic life. While there are many prohibitions against usury and the unjust accumulation of wealth, there is no larger plan spelled out. Nevertheless, we as Christians are not left without guidance in these matters. If Christians look closely at the biblical material, they can find there a number of guideposts to help society in life's journey as a community. It is these guideposts which the church is called on to follow as it helps people face the economic, political, social, and ecological challenges of this age. In this social statement reference will be made to many of these guideposts. However, special attention needs to be given to five such guideposts which Christ himself and the Church gave to Christians. The first four of these guideposts are recorded in the fifth chapter of Matthew in the Sermon on the Mount. In particular, attention needs to be given to the beatitudes regarding those who are poor in spirit (5:3), those who mourn (5:4), those who hunger and thirst for righteousness (5:6), those who are merciful (5:7), and those who are peacemakers (5:9).

III.A. *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven* (Matthew 5:3)

This beatitude is related to Isaiah 61:1-2, which in turn formed the Old Testament basis of Jesus' description of his own ministry.^v Luke records this description in the following way:

The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favour. (Luke 4:18-19)

At the heart of this beatitude is a concern which echoes throughout the Bible, namely the welfare of the poor in society. God cares about the plight and suffering of the poor and downtrodden. It is promised that they will be delivered and their plight will be reversed when the realm of God comes in its fullness. It is God's commitment that those who are downtrodden will be brought to wholeness in the coming realm of God. This promise, of course, is not just directed toward those who are economically poor. It also includes all those who find themselves at the margins of society -- the powerless, oppressed, and objects of unjust discrimination.

With the words *in spirit* the thrust of this beatitude is further filled out. This beatitude not only identifies God's concern for the well being of those who are afflicted, but also points to the importance for Christians of embracing a disposition that aligns itself with this commitment of God. Christians are to stand in solidarity with those who are poor and marginalized. We are to be one with them in addressing their needs and redressing the injustices they experience.

However, this solidarity involves more; it has another important dimension to it. Not only are we as Christians to dedicate ourselves to addressing the needs of those who are poor and marginalized, we are also called on to listen and learn from them. We are to discover through their experience a fuller appreciation of God's presence in the world. Among the poor who are faithful there is a spiritual sense to which all Christians need be attentive. They have a faith that is not built upon a pretense of power, control, or temporal security. Their own resources are not something in which they trust. Rather, theirs is a faith that emerges out of an appreciation of and strong need for God's love and mercy. It is a faith that recognizes the important place of true community; one based on the role God's inclusive love and mercy plays in enabling the well being of all people and all creation. Luther points to this when he notes:

...before God, we each in our heart must be spiritually poor. That is, we must not set our confidence, comfort and trust on temporal goods, nor hang our heart upon them and make Mammon our idol.^{vi}

In reading this beatitude some might conclude that the poverty of spirit reflects a basic passivity toward the world. This, however, is not true. The beatitude in fact calls for a commitment to the possibility of what God can do and is doing. It urges us to become an active part of the future God is preparing, in part, even here and now. It is a call to take the promise of God seriously and to live out of the hope of that promise.

Such a hope includes the press for and realization of justice in all its dimensions. This would involve justice as the pursuit of equality for all people, dignity in interdependent partnership with all of God's creation, as equality of opportunity for all people in need, and as equality of outcome for people to compensate for unfair advantages. It would also include vigilance on the part of all to seek continually to discover and acknowledge when and where the political, social, and economic systems that govern our lives are not facilitating justice in its fullness.^{vii}

III.B *Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.* (Matthew 5:4)

People who mourn are individuals who have experienced a sense of loss. While this can take a variety of forms, the thrust of this teaching of Jesus is toward a sense of our failure to have realized all that we should expect of ourselves as Christians. Moreover, it includes the realization, that despite all our efforts, only God is able to restore us to wholeness. We are all utterly dependent upon the love and grace of God. Those who mourn are people who are remorseful for their contribution to this state of affairs. They are individuals who acknowledge the way in which their sinful activity, or lack of helpful activity, has contributed to the fallen condition of the world.

This sense of loss and grief, however, is not just personal. People who mourn are also individuals who are sensitive and sorrowful for the injustice, suffering and dying they see in the world around them. There is a strong empathy with the pains and groaning of all creation as it struggles under the oppressive weight of corporate and personal sin. Luther underscores this when he writes:

Daily whenever they look at the world, they [Christians] must see and feel in their heart so much wickedness, arrogance, contempt, and blasphemy of God and God's Word, so much sorrow and sadness...^{viii}

But out of this empathy comes a heightened sense of compassion for others, and an appreciation for the ability of the Gospel to empower us to *bear one another's burdens* (Galatians 6:2). Through the power of God's love we are enabled to reach out and be with one another in the economic, social and political trials we face. We are engaged with one another in the sense of being part of the same community. In our solidarity with one another we form this community of people who stand not at a distance from one another, but who live out of a deep sense of interdependence.

And as we stand together, those who mourn in the spirit of this beatitude do so not with a sense of resignation, but one of hope. They have a hope that rejoices in the transforming love of God to be with us in our loss and to renew us and all of creation. It is a hope that lives out of the resurrection promise of Christ for all people and creation.

III.C. *Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.* (Matthew 5:7)

In commenting on this teaching of Jesus, Luther observes:

Now, this is the one aspect of mercy, that one gladly forgives the sinful and the frail. The other is to do good also to those who are outwardly poor and in need of help; on the basis of Matthew 25:35ff we call these 'works of mercy'.^{ix}

Luther continues:

...those who [embrace this beatitude] cling to Christ and believe in Him. They know of no holiness of their own...they are inclined not to despise anyone, but to assume and sympathize with the need of everyone else. To them applies the comforting promise: 'it is well with you who are merciful. For you will find pure mercy in turn, both here and hereafter...'^x

God's mercy in the Old Testament is described by the word *hesed*. This word points to the lovingkindness that God shows toward us and all humanity. Included in this are the gifts of nature's bounty, the joy and hope of God's forgiveness, as well as the gracious guidance of history in a manner that constantly reaffirms God's covenant with Israel, and finally all people.

This lovingkindness of God, *hesed*, is witnessed to in the New Testament with the Greek word *eleos*. Here the mercy of God is seen to be central to God's relation to humankind and creation. It is made manifest for us as saving grace (Titus 3:5), as the love of God which through Christ's death and resurrection gives us hope and eternal life (I Peter 1:3; Jude 2:11), and as that mercy which gave the gospel to the Gentiles and the whole world (Romans 9:23; 11:31; 15:9).

The mercy of God is linked to both compassion and justice. It provides the foundation upon which fulfilling and wholesome relationships among people can be built. It is through mercy that the work of justice in society can reach beyond the limitations of codes and practices that can often devolve into legalism. Every set of principles or laws, which with the best of intentions are designed to provide justice and fairness, can in a sinful world become the instruments of oppression and injustice. It is mercy and compassion that therefore need to be added to enable our practices and laws to reach beyond such suffering. The Bible finds this to be especially important in the case of those who are poor and marginalized in society. It is God's mercy, compassion, and love which call on us as Christians to infuse our laws, codes, and practices with mercy and compassion. For the Bible, justice is to be viewed from the perspective of those who are in need. In this way, the justice we seek in all areas of life can become the creative justice God calls us to in this beatitude. The mercy of God calls on us to work constantly to set people free from the economic and social circumstances and structures which oppress them, cause them suffering, and rob them of their well-being.

III.D. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God (Matthew 5:9)

The Hebrew word *shalom* characterizes the biblical understanding of peace. *Shalom* points to the condition in which wholeness and well being mark all parts of life. It is therefore the peacemaker who is dedicated to enabling *shalom* to become a reality. This is an on-going task for all Christians. Luther underscores this when he observes:

...the Lord here honours those who do their best to try and make peace, not only in their own lives but also among other people, who try to settle ugly and involved issues, who endure squabbling and try to avoid and prevent war and bloodshed.^{xi}

He adds:

Learn to put the best interpretation on what you hear about your neighbour...so that you may establish and preserve peace and harmony. Then you can honourably bear the title 'child of God' before the whole world and before the angels in heaven.

As Christians we are therefore called on to act in a manner that respects the needs and dignity of our neighbour. We are not to contribute to the alienation of one from another, but rather seek reconciliation, both in our private lives and in public policy. This we are to do, even if in that process we need to confront and oppose those forces which perpetuate alienation. Peacemaking does not turn a blind eye to wrongs that have been done, nor does it gloss over them with an easy sense of forgiveness. God's peace does not allow the ignoring of wrongs done. Rather we are called to acknowledge places where *shalom* has been denied or undermined, to repent for this state of affairs, and to commit ourselves to bring about changes that will recover *shalom* in the future. Peacemaking is not an easy task. However, God's final *shalom* has been promised to us. It is out of our faith and hope in this promise that we take up the task of peacemaking.

III.E. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.

(Matthew 5:6)

The word “righteousness” appears in the gospels only ten times and seven of those appearances are in the gospel of Matthew. As it appears in this beatitude, it is correlated with Isaiah 49:10 and 55:1 and relates to the activities Christians are to pursue in response to their faith in God’s covenant and the grace that God has bestowed upon each of us. Luther puts it well when he says:

...the short and simple meaning of [this beatitude] is this: that [everyone] is righteous and blessed who continually works and strives with all [their] might to promote the general welfare and proper behaviour of everyone and who helps to maintain and support this by word and deed, by precept and example.xii

In light of this, we as Christians are called on to do the will of God in all dimensions of both our personal lives shared lives in community. This beatitude has as its focus the promised realm of God in terms of which Christians are to act in the world. Where there is alienation, duplicity, enmity, and exploitation, we are to act so as to renew our relationships and our communities so they properly reflect and anticipate the realm of God.

This we are to do, however, not as a duty that will somehow qualify us for God’s grace and salvation. Rather, this beatitude is concerned with the whole orientation and attitude of Christians as they respond to the grace of God, which has already been given to them unconditionally through the life, death and resurrection of Christ. In addressing this point Luther notes:

Righteousness in this passage must not be taken in the sense of that principled Christian righteousness by which a person becomes pious and acceptable to God. [The beatitudes are] but instruction about the fruits and good works of a Christian which grow and follow from faith.xiii

In this passage the focus of attention is on the formation of Christians as disciples. It is a call for Christians to equip and dedicate themselves to the often-difficult task of a true sense of justice and love in their personal and societal relationships. It is a call for Christians to re-orient and re-dedicate themselves to the task of realizing in the world the mission described in the four beatitudes above.

Such a re-orientation and re-dedication should not, however, be taken on by Christians in a half-hearted way. The passage makes this clear through the Greek forms that are used. Our press for righteousness in the world must be as intense as the hunger of a starving person for food and the thirst of someone who is desperate for something to drink. For such a person their passion is insatiable. In the same way the Christian’s passion for the reign of God in our world should be totally consuming and unquenchable. It should be marked by unceasing diligence, eagerness, and longing. Moreover, our passion must not be for a part of this reign that might affect only a part of our lives. It must be for the full reign of God as it affects all dimensions of our lives, personally and societally. In short, our passion for the Reign of God is to have no limits. It should be our lifestyle.

And for those who embrace this passage, the promise is given that their efforts will not be in vain. Though they may not see the full success of their endeavours, they have God’s assurance that God will embrace their activity as a part of the coming Realm of God -- truly a blessing and an assurance of the highest order.

These five teachings form an interconnected set of guideposts for our journey toward and within the unfolding Realm of God. The challenge to the church is to embody them as we address the economic, social, ecological and political realities that confront communities of the human family today.

The following are some discussion questions for small groups:

1. What images are given of the poor in the popular media and society in general?
2. How as Christians can we lift up the poor, economically, socially or spiritually?
3. How can you see God working in what would often seem to be hopeless situations?
4. Do you agree with Luther that our understanding of mercy should be linked to our doing good “to those who are outwardly poor and in need of help”? Why or why not?
5. On what occasions have we experienced the laws or rules of society as instruments of justice and fairness, on the one hand, and instruments of oppression and injustice, on the other? How has mercy or compassion made a difference in these situations?
6. How is a sense of wholeness or well being in people’s lives linked to peace and security in their communities?

SECTION IV HEALTHY HUMAN COMMUNITIES

God created humanity as social creatures. People need to live in community. However, healthy human communities are not inevitable. They are a gift to people.

Community is a gift of God's grace apart from human merits or works. True community is not simply a nation, a social class or an association of individuals. People can gather in groups, but only God can create community. Community is a special fellowship that is based on love and justice. Injustice destroys community, where justice builds and nourishes community. True community is a gift of God's grace, power, justice and love. God's ultimate gift of community is the kingdom of God.xiv

Communities are comprised of a complex and ultimately fragile pattern of relationships that provide for the well being and security of people by ensuring a sense of identity, a place to contribute to the lives of others, and a sense of purpose for a person's life. Whereas in ancient times communities were more limited geographically and numerically, in modern times communities are mass societies that rely on advanced forms of communication; complex forms of political, economic and social organization; and technology.

Communities have to ensure that there is a process to address the social, political and economic needs of people. In response to the social needs, family, neighbour, and friends should provide nurturing and caring. On a broader level, culture provides a sense of identity for people in community. Communities need a political means to ensure a process for making collective decisions. Political processes need to ensure that people feel ownership for the outcomes of these decisions. The economic process must serve to produce and distribute the common wealth and resources in a just manner to all members of the community.

Increasingly, one set of economic answers—liberating the market—is put forward as the exclusive answer to all human needs and the means for overcoming the economic, political and social paradoxes modern communities face. The dependence on this one economic approach indicates a belief that healthy communities ensue from economic activity alone. It fails to recognize that the market and economic activity have their limits. It distributes the common wealth only to those who can pay through private consumption. Furthermore, it fails to recognize that the reliance on private consumption is being used to disguise a diversion of the greater share of the common wealth to fewer people or selective groups. Today the distribution of wealth through private consumption is becoming increasingly unbalanced.

Responsible economic stewardship requires recognition of the important role of the social, cultural and political in developing healthy human communities. Economic decisions must be concerned principally with safeguarding and improving the well being of communities by enabling their social and political function. Economic activity must create wealth without compromising the integrity of creation for future generations. Economic systems in and of themselves are not to be supported in perpetuity, but must be judged by the degree to which they serve the well being of people. The current domination of this one approach to economics is leading to the destruction of community. What is called for is the development of a new approach—*sustainable social economics*—and the building of a new social covenant.

SECTION V A NEW SOCIAL COVENANT BASED ON JUSTICE

Covenants have a long history in religious traditions. They carried the status of formal agreements, but remained informal in many respects. Covenants were not always made among those of equal power. They contained both promises and duties. As for the people of Israel, their covenant with God called them to the social purpose of being a blessing to the nations of the world. A new social covenant should be a renewed call to members of communities to a higher and nobler purpose -- to ensure the well being of all people and the preservation of creation.

The Church has both a pastoral and prophetic mission to undertake in service to the world. One expression of this ministry is to be a community that engages in ethical and moral deliberation. Another expression is to provide a place to invite those people of good will to deliberate on the social questions facing communities. In both this pastoral and prophetic mission, the manifestation of justice is both the measure and the mandate of the vocation of the Church in the world.

In working toward this new social covenant, justice will need to be manifested in a multiplicity of forms. The guideposts that Jesus offers serve as a moral compass, reminding people of the centrality of justice in the development of human communities. There are different understandings regarding the meaning and obligations of the term “justice.” For Christians:

Justice may be described as distributive love. It is what God's love does when many neighbors must be served with limited resources. Justice is the form of God's creating and preserving love as reason and power through persons and structures in community life mediate that love.xv

One purpose of this specific aspect of mission is to articulate and model new understandings of a sustainable social economics based upon economic, civil, social, and ecological justice. Justice is an essential foundation for sustaining creation and preserving healthy communities. Justice is a moral compass for the service of the church in the world. Justice is an indicator that the fundamental dignity of people is respected within the community. As well, justice is essential in order that there is reverence for creation. In developing a new social covenant, sustainable social economic decisions will require the doing of justice in its fullest form – economic justice, civil justice and eco-justice.

Sustainable social economics will require continuing work for **economic justice** characterized by fair and equitable production, distribution and consumption of the common wealth.

Sustainable social economics will also require continued development of **civil justice** that protects basic human rights and recognizes the responsibilities of people living in communities. In its simplest form, it is equality before the law. At a deeper level, it involves respect for those rights that assure the dignity and well being of all people, all of whom are created in the image of God.

Sustainable social economics will further require a commitment to **social justice** characterized by fostering a sense of mutual responsibility, gender equity between men and women, inter-generational equity between one generation and the next, and full participation in the decisions of community life.

Sustainable social economics will also be guided by an understanding of **eco-justice**, where creation is preserved, sustainable lifestyles encouraged, and unrestricted consumption and development discouraged.

In working toward a new social covenant, Christians realize that human efforts to realize justice in communities, regardless of noble intentions, are always proximate and never ultimate.

God mandates the doing of justice. (Micah 6:8). The specific content of that justice, however, is not directly revealed but is discovered as life is lived amid claim and counterclaim. The discernment of justice involves every aspect of the human being. It is a task of reason, requiring the counting, measuring and classifying of factors that admit to such analysis. It is intuitive, involving the capacity for empathy. It is political, involving the struggle for power among competing groups. Above all, it is moral, involving the fundamental human capacity to know what enhances and what destroys the being and dignity of the person. That capacity, which is “conscience”, grows and is nurtured in the creative interaction of persons and groups, in the recollection of and reflection on past experience, and in the confronting of new situations.xvi

Justice is the form that love takes in a sinful and broken world. Often it is imprecise and imperfect in its expression. Many will claim to work for justice. For Christians, the doing of justice will need to be measured against this fuller understanding of justice, recognizing the limits of justice itself.

SECTION VI STEPS TOWARD A NEW SOCIAL COVENANT

Developing this new social covenant will require what some have called “social transformation.”¹³ In a modern complex world, people will need a different understanding of the dynamics that build communities. Modern communities cannot be sustained as the sum of individual private actions. Nor can the market build them with some minimal role for government. Communities will need to understand that communities are created and sustained by the simultaneous actions of consumers and producers (an economic sector), elected leaders and citizens (a public sector), and neighbours and families (a social sector), living responsibly within the finite environment (Creation).

This social transformation will involve some specific choices. A new social covenant will require that our communities take some specific steps in this new direction to restore economic enterprise and recover political participation in economic decisions, while ensuring support for a vibrant social sector and preserving ecological integrity.

VI.A. Restoring Economic Enterprise

To develop a new social covenant, communities will need to restore confidence in economic enterprise, where genuine wealth is created and shared equitably within communities. There will need to be a variety of strategies to undertake this task. The approaches and ideas put forward will need to be measured against the benchmark of human well being.

Markets will remain a central instrument in the distribution of the common wealth of the community. The private market, governed by the principle of competition, historically has been a means for the distribution of the common wealth. Markets will be important in facilitating economic choices for individual consumers and collective communities.

Unquestioning adherence to market dynamics can lead to injustice and undermine human well being. Care will need to be taken that market forces are not used to justify certain actions or directions as inevitable. For the market to serve an appropriate role, the market cannot be only an instrument for individual choices. People cannot merely be reduced to the role of consumers of commodities, government services, or culture. There is a need to recognize the variety of roles and contributions people make to community life. Furthermore, there will be a need to recognize the importance of collective public choices made through political and social institutions. The following are some of the steps to be taken to ensure that markets function in ways to sustain people and communities.

VI.B. Developing and Maintaining Sustainable Livelihoods

Whereas communities have described work principally as paid employment, communities faced with increasing unemployment and underemployment will need to develop new approaches to work. A broader concept of work is required that recognizes both paid and unpaid work. Policies should still seek to achieve full employment, but this may mean altering traditional approaches to formal employment through a shorter work week, job sharing, paid sabbatical programs for all employees, and expanded paternity and maternity provisions.^{xvii}

Policies will need to ensure not just that people are employed, but that such employment provides a sustainable livelihood. This means that remuneration must be at adequate levels and be equitable for all people. Communities will require labour intensive policies that prevent job losses due to the indiscriminate use of technology or for the short-term profitability of businesses.

Primarily, women as care providers and nurturers do most unpaid work voluntarily. Communities will need to develop a means to recognize the value of unpaid work both formally in their system of national accounting and informally. While unpaid, such work results in economic benefits for the whole community.

The employment of people under the age of thirty-five is a major social responsibility that has long-term implications for communities. Support for access to secondary and post secondary education that includes career education is important. Opportunities for entry level employment will be essential to establish the skills and knowledge needed for the future. Communities will need to safeguard the rights of workers. These should include the right to freely chosen work, to collective bargaining, to a safe working environment, to form free trade unions, protection for migrant workers, and a prohibition against child and slave labour. Some of these rights and responsibilities are articulated under the United Nations Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights and the standards of the International Labour Organization. These forums should be encouraged in their efforts to develop standards and mechanisms that safeguard workers.

VI.C. A Responsible Role for Capital

VI.C.i. Private Property

Some cultures have a well-defined concept of the ownership of private property. Insofar as God is the creator of all, private property is never an absolute right. Property and assets are entrusted as part of the common wealth of the community, with a social obligation on the owners' parts that they be used for the common good of the community. A similar view may be taken of financial assets as well. Those who claim for themselves more than they reasonably require are guilty of the sin of avarice.

VI.C.ii. Utilizing Appropriate Technologies

Technology offers many hopes for the future. However, technologies will need to be used in ways that further human well being. Technology must always be applied in ways that are appropriate to the context in order to further human well being. In some settings where labour is abundant, appropriate technologies are labour intensive. In other contexts, where labour may be limited, appropriate technologies may be more capital intensive. The primary concern should be the recognition of the importance of work to the well being of people and communities.

VI.C.iii. Accountability of Transnational Corporations

In the past decade there has been an exponential growth in the number of corporations engaged in international economic activity. In many cases, these transnational corporations (TNC's) have assets and resources that can dwarf those of governments and national communities. While transnational corporations can provide much needed investment and economic development, as with all institutions, accountability is required to ensure human well being is served. International mechanisms should be developed and supported that help corporations to be accountable to communities. These should include Codes of Conduct as well as appropriate laws and requirements governing the use of the international commons, those areas and regions that are considered beyond national jurisdictions.^{xviii} Non-governmental organizations and community organizations should be encouraged and supported in monitoring TNC activity and encouraging socially responsible corporate behaviour.

VI.C.iv. The Responsibility for International Capital

Vast amounts of currency circulate in international capital markets. Some of these resources are invested for productive enterprises that generate common wealth for the use of the community. However, substantial amounts are utilized for speculative efforts that produce or create nothing of permanent value. This has led some to suggest that this is a *casino economy* where hedge funds, financial institutions, and some transnational corporations gamble on fluctuations in currency exchange rates or the value of equities. Such speculation in the longer term undermines productive economic activity. Instruments, such as a tax on international currency speculation, that would not deter legitimate investment, but might moderate speculative activities, and would provide necessary public revenues, should be developed and supported by national governments and international organizations.

VI.D. Recovering Political Confidence

Regrettably, public confidence in the commitment and ability of governments to ensure individual and community well being has been seriously called into question. There are those who argue for less government involvement in economic life. As economic life changes, there may be a different role for governments. Governments serve people by enabling communities to make collective choices for such necessities as health care, physical infrastructure, education, police and fire services, and other services that insure a high quality of life.

A new social covenant will require encouraging public support for responsible government stewardship of economic life. Appropriate government that affirms the principle of civic responsibility, not less government, is critical to establish and maintain public confidence in the political process. All communities require confidence in an ongoing political process that is more than just regular elections at periodic intervals of time. Such an interactive political infrastructure continually needs to be nurtured. Decisions affecting our economic life will require informed political discussion and debate. This will require the development of new forms of public education, and models for discussion on the choices that are available. The public will need to be involved seriously in the decisions that will ultimately affect them.

Whereas in the past there were publicly provided services, governments will not be the sole provider of all services, but will need to develop social partnerships and safeguard a threshold for the basic necessities for people. This will be particularly important for those who have been excluded from society because of income, health, age, gender, race or nationality. The delivery of services may be through the social sector or civil society.

As well, governments should provide those services where their unique position realizes economic efficiencies, such as in the area of health insurance or where there is an overriding public purpose, such as in the area of education. Crown corporations may also be an appropriate means of safeguarding the public purpose.

Government does have a responsibility for raising revenues through progressive taxation to provide the physical, social, and political infrastructure that makes economic life possible. Taxes are not inherently bad. Revenues from taxation are a means for exercising our responsibility to each other. As such, they are an expression of our social solidarity. Taxation and government spending should be understood as tools for managing economic life and redistributing the common wealth. Government will also need to safeguard the public interest through legislation and regulations.

In a global community, renewed energies will need to be invested in issues of global governance. Many issues now have transnational implications for economic life—flows of international capital, the activities of transnational corporations, the establishment of labour, environmental and social standards, as well as the issues of peace building, migration and displaced populations. Political Institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, as well as the United Nations, will need to be revitalized in ways that ensure public participation and accountability, and clearly foster concrete ways for improving the quality of life for all people. Particular attention will be required to ensure that the rules of international economic life do not further disadvantage poorer nations, that poor nations are given relief from international debts, and that alternatives to structural adjustment programs are made possible.

While trade has been put forward as the means to assist poorer nations, rich nations still retain a responsibility to provide financial resources to poor nations. Governments should renew their commitment to their 1968 pledge to provide .7% of GNP for Overseas Development Assistance (ODA). This aid should not be tied to purchases from donor countries and can best be provided through non-governmental organizations.

VI.E. Supporting the Social Sector (Civil Society)

There seems to be widespread agreement that the social sector -- also known as the *third sector* or *civil society* -- will play an increasingly important role in sustaining community life. In developed countries like Canada, the social sector is often referred to as the voluntary or not-for-profit sector.

The social sector is governed by the principle of collaboration and cooperation. Because voluntary organizations are motivated by a selfless desire to help other people, voluntary organizations enjoy a degree of public trust that can mobilize people and resources. These characteristics and altruistic motivations enable voluntary organizations to be uniquely placed to *negotiate a public social agenda*.^{xix} The social sector will be crucial in building a new social covenant in some of the following ways.

VLE.i *New ideas and new approaches to community problems*

The social sector will be an important vehicle for the delivery of social services and programs in partnership with governments. In fact, many services have been delivered this way. For example, the churches have provided many services in the area of housing, health, childcare and other areas in partnership with government. Equally important, the experience and competence of voluntary organizations will be a source of many new ideas and creative approaches to social problems facing our communities. As well, these organizations will form a counterbalance to governments by monitoring government policies and programs to ensure their effectiveness in addressing real human needs.

VLE.ii *Volunteerism and Care Providers*

Volunteerism is a critical part of social life. Many volunteers provide care and services that would not be affordable otherwise. The social sector can help foster this sense of generosity in the human spirit. If public confidence is to be maintained in the social sector, organizations of civil society will clearly need to be not-for-profit. Organizations created by governments and businesses may serve a useful function, but they clearly need to be distinguished from those independent of government and the private sector.

Care needs to be taken not to commercialize these important relationships. The efforts of the social sector must primarily be not-for-profit activities. To introduce market dynamics into the voluntary sector would be to corrupt the admirable attributes that attract people to serve in these organizations. The public and private sectors need to be sensitive to these dynamics in their relationships with the voluntary sector. It would be easy to use the voluntary sector as a substitute for civil service responsibilities. Companies can transform supportive relationships into marketing opportunities through endorsements or sponsorships. The social sector should be motivated by the highest values of the community.

VLE-iii *Creating employment*

Many observers believe that as communities move from industrial societies to knowledge based societies, the social sector will be an area where employment will be created. Many voluntary organizations cannot be sustained without paid administrative support and coordination. Some aspects of the services they provide require competent trained professional people, such as in the case of child care. Such employment opportunities will need to be created and supported, as has been the case with other forms of work. This indicates the need for providing adequate incomes with appropriate benefits for those working in the voluntary sector.

The voluntary sector is supported by personal charitable contributions, the philanthropy of the private sector, and through government transfers of tax revenues. People need to be encouraged in their individual charitable giving to volunteer organizations. Corporate philanthropy is another means that can provide necessary support for the social sector. Nevertheless, publicly funded support for organizations that provide an important contribution to community life is necessary, especially since these organizations may not garner public attention and thereby be unable to launch broad public financial appeals. As Lutherans have noted previously:

Social justice should not be pitted against personal benevolence (often called charity) or corporate benevolence (often called philanthropy); but neither should benevolence be substituted for justice. In its true sense, benevolence is the loving response directly to others in need; in its false sense, it is the vain attempt to purchase a good conscience and to avoid the demand for justice. Rightly understood, benevolence and justice complement each other as different forms of the Creator's providential love.^{xx}

Long term secure public funding, in addition to charity and philanthropy, is important in building a strong and energetic social sector.

VI.F. Preserving the Integrity of Creation

With increased awareness of the implications of human existence and activity on the environment, communities are moving toward an ethical attitude toward creation. The governing principle of the relationship between human communities and the natural community will be a precautionary principle. The onus will be on demonstrating that no harm will be done to the ecosphere prior to activities being undertaken; this is in contrast to the presumption that activity should proceed if no harm can be proven.

VI.F.i. *Recognizing the Integrity of Creation*

For much of human history, creation was considered the anvil of human enterprise. It existed solely in the service of the human community. As we fast approach ecological limits, humanity has come to understand the intrinsic value and integrity of creation itself. It is not merely another factor of economic production. Our economic activity can no longer presume that natural resources are not costly resources. Nor can our economic activity presume that, because resources are present, they are automatically available for human production and consumption.

VI.F.ii. *Preserving the Global Commons*

There are many ecological challenges that transcend traditional economic and political boundaries. The depletion of the ozone layer, the impact of emissions that lead to global warming, deforestation of both tropical rainforests and Canadian forests, the threat to the biodiversity of the planet, and the trade in toxic waste products are but a few. Our economic life needs to develop and support international mechanisms to safeguard and preserve the global commons, those regions beyond national borders and those regions that transcend national borders. Some small advances have been made in such initiatives as the 1987 Law of the Sea Convention, the 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, and the Framework Convention of Climate Change which was agreed to at the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1993. But many national governments have failed to translate these broad policies into legislation that has concrete goals and objectives for their jurisdictions. Much more needs to be done to ensure compliance and develop enforceable standards.

SECTION VII AN ENABLING RESOLUTION FOR THE ELCIC

As a community of Christians called by Jesus to a life of discipleship and service in the world, the ELCIC has a contribution to make in moving toward this new social covenant. In adopting this statement be it resolved that:

As the Church addresses economic issues

- The ELCIC will continue to analyze and study the economic issues and address the root causes of government indebtedness, particularly the role of high real interest rates and the erosion of a progressive tax system.
- The ELCIC will help to redefine the concept of work by reclaiming an understanding of vocation. While true for clergy, the preaching and teaching of the church can affirm the sacredness of people's service to the community in a variety of paid and unpaid occupations?
- The ELCIC will help model new forms and patterns of work. They can encourage part-time employment with adequate remuneration and benefits, job sharing, paternity and maternity leaves, and sabbatical programs for clergy and lay professionals. The ELCIC should consider developing short-term sabbatical opportunities for clergy and lay people to pursue extended education at schools and seminaries of the church.

- The ELCIC will work to recognize the right of all people to work and contribute to community life. To this end, the ELCIC will encourage full employment policies by governments and recognition of unpaid work in government programs and national accounts.
- The ELCIC will continue to recognize the rights of workers to a safe working environment, to organize in the workplace, and to other measures that honour international labour codes and standards.
- Where possible, the ELCIC will encourage various initiatives that strengthen employer-employee partnerships and greater democracy in the workplace.
- The ELCIC will develop and monitor its own employment practices to ensure they comply with national and international best practices in codes for the private sector.
- The ELCIC will encourage and support micro-economic enterprises, cooperatives, community economic development initiatives, and other forms of worker ownership.
- In exercising stewardship over its own investments and resources, the ELCIC will be an active shareholder, encouraging corporate social responsibility with those companies it partially owns, and, where partner churches or communities are stakeholders, in the outcome of corporate activities.
- The ELCIC will continue to support development projects through the Global Hunger and Development Appeal that support community-based economic development.

As the Church addresses political issues of economic life

- The ELCIC will encourage its members to exercise responsible citizenship. Voting and participation in political parties should be encouraged. Participation by members in public debate and in organizations that inform the political process should be encouraged.
- The ELCIC will pray for and continually publicly affirm the vocation of those serving in public life and the important responsibilities governments have to ensure the common good for community life.
- The ELCIC will engage in a public witness that advocates a priority on policies and programs that provide for the needs of people, such as health care, education, and income security programs.
- For the ELCIC, human rights instruments provide an important minimum benchmark for evaluating the effectiveness of economic policies in enhancing the well being of communities. In partnership with ecumenical organizations and partner churches, the ELCIC will actively participate in monitoring, intervening and promoting human rights according to international declarations, covenants, and agreements with governments and human rights bodies such as the United Nations Human Rights Commission.
- The ELCIC will continue to work for the fuller participation of people in decision-making, particularly those who are most affected.

As the Church in relationship to Civil Society

- The ELCIC affirms both the work and role of not-for-profit organizations in the social sector.

- The ELCIC will work to provide services to communities and to develop community partnerships where possible and appropriate to provide for the needs of their communities.
- The ELCIC will work to affirm the role volunteers play in community organizations and will seek to model appropriate models for volunteer involvement and recognition in this church.
- The ELCIC will encourage public support of voluntary organizations based upon clear principles and services to be provided.
- The ELCIC will support remunerated employment creation in the social sector and will seek to model appropriate opportunities within the church for paid employment.

As the Church proclaims a reverence for God's Creation

- The ELCIC will preach and teach a reverence for creation based upon God's intention for creation.
- The ELCIC will encourage congregations, agencies, and institutions of this church to audit their practices to ensure environmental responsibility.
- The ELCIC in its public witness will support public policies and private sector practices that preserve the integrity of creation. These can include Canada's ratification of international conventions, such as the proposed Convention on Climate Change.

In the Life of the Church

- The ELCIC will encourage the development of materials and programs to help its members study current economic, political, social and environmental issues through education programs.
- The ELCIC will continue to pray for those in positions of leadership in communities.
- The ELCIC will encourage congregations, synods and the national church to identify specific ways for members of this church to undertake these actions in their respective communities.

Sixth Biennial Convention
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
 July 26, 1997

ii. The United Nations reports that of the 100 largest economies, 47 are transnational corporations (TNC's). The New Internationalist (see March 1996) reports that by 1994, there were 37,000 parent TNC's with some 200,000 national affiliates controlling thirty-three percent (33%) of the world's productive assets.

ii. See the work of Project Ploughshares, an ecumenical coalition supported by the ELCIC.

-
- iii. See the Background Information of the United Nations for the World Summit on Social Development.
- iv. Of the 82 armed conflicts between 1989 and 1993, only three were wars between nation states. Most were in poorer countries of the Southern Hemisphere. During 1993, 42 countries had 52 major conflicts while another 37 had political violence. Of these 79 countries, 65 were in the developing world. See The New Internationalist, March 1996, p.18.
- v. *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour, and the day of vengeance of our God; comfort to all who mourn. (Isaiah 61:1-2 NRSV)*
- vi. Luther's Works, vol. 21, Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri, 1956, p.13.
- vii. One expression of this hope in Hebrew Scriptures was the ideal of the *Jubilee*. While most scholars agree that this was not practiced, it did prescribe an ideal that every 49 years property was to be returned and soil was to remain uncultivated. The ideal reflected the belief that God was the landowner and that all the people of God should share equally in its use. Should an owner be forced to part with the land, it should be returned to them or their family. Monopolizing land in the hands of a few people was seen as contrary to God's intention and was denounced by the prophets.
- viii. Luther's Works, vol. 21, Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri, 1956, p.20.
- ix. Luther's Works, vol. 21, Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri, 1956, p.30.
- x. Luther's Works, vol. 21, Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri, 1956, p.31.
- xi. Luther's Works, vol. 21, Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri, 1956, p.39.
- xii. Luther's Works, vol. 21, Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri, 1956, p.26.
- xiii. Luther's Works, vol. 21, Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri, 1956, p.26.
- xiv. A Statement on Biblical Justice, adopted by the Eighth General Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada, July 8, 1982.
- xv. A Social Statement on Economic Justice - Stewardship of Creation in Community, adopted by the Lutheran Church in America, June 24 - July 2, 1980.
- xvi. A Social Statement on Economic Justice - Stewardship of Creation in Community, adopted by the Lutheran Church in America, June 24 - July 2, 1980.
- xvii. Traditionally, *full employment* was approximately three percent (3%) of those participating formally in the work force. This was considered the normal percentage of the workforce that was in transition. Currently, official unemployment ranges between nine (9%) and eleven (11%) percent in Canada. This does not account for those who have given up trying to find work, nor does it account for regional variations. The Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice (ECEJ) estimates that given these considerations, unemployment may be closer to twenty percent (20%). Similar trends are evident in other developed countries and are even worse in poorer nations.
- xviii. The Taskforce on the Churches and Corporate Responsibility (TCCR) has extensive experience with Codes of Conduct beginning with codes that were invoked against companies doing business in South Africa during apartheid. TCCR along with the Ecumenical Centre for Corporate Responsibility (ECCR) in the United Kingdom and the Inter-Church Committee for Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) in the United States, have developed *Principles for Global Corporate Responsibility -- Benchmarks for Measuring Business Performance*. The United Nation's had previously established a *Centre for Transnational Corporations* that monitored and reported on TNC activity. Unfortunately, the Centre has been disbanded and their work absorbed into another UN department in Geneva.
- xix. Larson, Rebecca, *An Ecumenical Model for Participation in Civil Society*, Coalitions for Justice, Novalis, Ottawa,

Ontario, 1994, p.294. This is a helpful description of the characteristics of the organization of *civil society*.

^{xx} A Social Statement on Economic Justice - Stewardship of Creation in Community, adopted by the Lutheran Church in America, June 24 - July 2, 1980.