

A Resolution and Response to the Far-reaching and Long-lasting Effects of the COVID – 19 Pandemic

SUMMARY

This resolution calls upon the Southwest Conference of the United Church in all its member churches in all its settings to this time of pandemic to reclaim the imperative to share God's resources equitably and sustainably with all God's children; to affirm the role of public institutions paid for by taxpayers for sharing essential services and protecting the good to the wider community; and to honor and uplift the integrity of God's creation. Each congregation in the Southwest conference in its various settings are urged to implement additional ministries and programs in their church and the wider community for the unemployed, dislocated, indebted, hungry and distressed; to undertake teaching ministries that adopt a simpler, just, debt free and sustainable lifestyle and to bring Christ's voice into the public arena advocating and facilitate policy to shape a more just, equitable world.

BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL RATIONALE

Our Jewish and Christian traditions honor the text from Leviticus 19:33-34 (adapted from 23 NRSV): "When an immigrant resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the immigrant. The immigrant who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the immigrant as yourself, for you were immigrants in the land of Egypt." We believe that human beings are entitled to live healthy, secure lives. We forget that each of us is accountable for the poverty in our world and we must work to eradicate it.

A just and healthy society and the eradication of poverty rest upon public institutions and policies that have fairness built into them... As Micah proclaimed, God's vision is for all to sit under their own vines and fig trees (Micah 4:4). In a good and just society, all have the opportunity to care for themselves, to make their own contributions to the whole.

TEXT OF THE MOTION

Whereas: Before COVID-19, nearly 700 people died everyday because of poverty and inequality in this country. The frontlines of this pandemic are the poor and dispossessed - those who do not have access to healthcare, housing, water, decent wages, stable work or child care;

Whereas: Almost half of all families face food insecurity during the ongoing pandemic, with Black, Latinx, Indigenous Peoples and undocumented families the most affected, according to a report from No Kid Hungry, a campaign addressing childhood hunger from the nonprofit Share Our Strength;

Whereas: Many families with students learning at home can't access the free breakfasts and lunches through the National School Lunch Program that they depended on when their children were attending school in person;

Whereas: With mass layoffs in hospitality, retail, and entertainment – earnings have simply disappeared for millions of workers. Households that previously strained to pay rent are now finding it impossible.;

Whereas: Older Americans, already discriminated against in the marketplace have fewer opportunities for work as they are at a greater risk for morbidity and mortality due to COVID 19;

Whereas: Housing insecurity is on the rise as individuals are not able to make rent and mortgage payments moving more people to seek shelters serving homeless individuals or life on the streets.

Whereas: The return of a strong economy that will provide economic support for households will take years due to months of massive job layoffs, accumulation of debt, ineffective governmental leadership, inadequate public welfare programs and lack of an effective vaccine and widely inoculated population;

Whereas: Before Covid-19, there was a gender pay gap for women, being paid on average 82 cents for every dollar earned by men. Women are now disproportionately represented in industries that are expected to decline the most during the pandemic. According to the Center for American Progress, women have lost 5.4 million jobs during the pandemic-induced recession compared with 4.4 million lost by men and among unemployed women ages 20 and older, nearly 2 in 5 have been out of work for six months or longer. Women have been and will continue to be impacted at a greater level than men as they assume a greater role in providing unpaid care for elders, children and their education; have faced challenges of receiving appropriate reproductive health care during the pandemic;

Therefore we need durable policies that address deep-seated inequities and give every baby the ingredients to thrive.

Whereas: Even before COVID 19 and its economic and social fallout, the littlest among us did not have the supports they needed to thrive. Because of these disparities, the pandemic has wreaked havoc on the conditions that contribute to babies' development and well-being and families' stability (from the *State of Babies Yearbook 2021 Zero to Three*).

Whereas: Many in our culture who have the greatest economic privilege, the wealthiest of the wealthy, have grown their collective wealth an estimated 685 billion mid-March through early August 2020;

Whereas: The Southwest Conference of the United Church of Christ has an abundance of God's resources, more than enough for all and these resources are not being equitably shared;

Be it Resolved: That the Southwest Conference Annual Meeting 2021 calls upon all its member churches and communities in all its settings to reclaim the imperative to share God's resources equitably and sustainably with all God's children; to affirm the role of public institutions paid for by taxpayers for sharing essential services and protecting the good to the wider community; and to honor and uplift the integrity of God's creation;

Be it Further Resolved: That the Southwest Conference of the United Church of Christ develop programs and resources to support pastors and congregations in their response to the need for equity that the pandemic has brought to light.

Be it Further Resolved: That the Southwest Conference of the United Church of Christ in all its settings will work to make our culture reflect the following values:

- That societies and nations are judged by the way they care for their most vulnerable citizens;
- That governments policies and services are central to serving the common good;
- And that the sum total of individual choices in any private marketplace does not constitute the public good.

Be it Further Resolved: That each congregation and community in the Southwest conference in its various settings be urged:

- to respond as they are able in the light of the economic crisis by partnering with and/or implementing additional ministries and programs for the unemployed, dislocated, indebted, hungry and distressed in their churches and community;
- and to undertake teaching ministries and provide resources that promote the adoption of simpler, just, debt free and sustainable lifestyles for those in their churches and community.

Be it Finally Resolved: That this resolution of witness calling for an increase in direct and charitable actions to serve those who are struggling and suffering in the current economic crisis resulting from the Pandemic also seek social justice through political action and advocacy to likewise bring Christ's voice into the public arena to shape a more just and equitable society and more global economic system.