Resolution 7: Economic Justice & Income Inequality

Submitted by: Social Justice and Advocacy Committee

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Resolved, that the 230th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut calls upon our Bishops, the House of Bishops, the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, the President of the House of Deputies, and the Executive Council of The Episcopal Church to speak out and name economic inequality as a spiritual and moral issue of immediate and urgent concern;

And be it further resolved, that this Convention requests the Presiding Bishop to convene an interfaith coalition to provide moral leadership for the establishment of economic justice in our country;

And be it further resolved, that to put our faith and conviction into action, the Episcopal Church in Connecticut, and all congregations and institutions within our Diocese are urged to pay all lay employees a liveable wage.

Explanation:
Since 1970, the richest 1 percent of Americans have gained a larger share of total national pre-tax income, and this increase in inequality has been exacerbated by a regressive tax policy. Tax rates on the top 1 percent of taxpayers have fallen over this same period. The growing gap is not only of income but also of total wealth. The bottom 60 percent lost wealth during these years.

Our sense of values have become distorted, when making money justifies the means, and where the U.S. subprime crisis came to mean exploiting the poorest and least educated among us. Joseph E. Stiglitz (Nobel Prize Winner in Economics, former Chairman of the Presidents Council of Economic Advisors, Chief Economist of the World Bank) has written, “Much of what has gone on can only be described by the words MORAL DEPRIVATION. Something has happened to the moral compass of so many people working in the financial sector and elsewhere... it says something significant about the society.”
How does this resolution further God’s mission of restoration and reconciliation with all creation?

“‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” Matthew 22:36-40.

As Episcopalians, we bind ourselves in our baptismal covenant, “to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbor as ourselves” and “to strive for justice and peace among all persons,” and “respect the dignity of every human being.”

In our Book of Common Prayer, we pray that in this nation no one may suffer the ravages of poverty and that “every one of us may enjoy a fair portion of the riches of this land.” (Prayer 36, pg. 826) Also we pray that God will “guide the people of this land so to use our public and private wealth that all may find suitable and fulfilling employment, and receive just payment for their labor.” (Prayer 30, pg. 824)

Our financial system has become deeply distorted: financial institutions that are “too big to fail,” investment instruments few can understand, and pervasive conflicts of interest. The suffering and overpowered majority will continue to lose the struggle for jobs, affordable housing, education, retirement security, a sustainable environment and peace if we keep silent. This situation cries out for us as people of faith to open our eyes, ears, minds and hearts to address this growing bitter reality.

We must take responsibility for our own relative wealth and evaluate our own financial practices individually and as a church. We must use our voices and our assets to seek justice and relieve the suffering and inequity that surround us.

Requirements to implement the resolution:
Notifications to:

Our Bishops
The House of Bishops
The Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church
The President of the House of Deputies
The Executive Council of the Episcopal Church
All congregations and institutions within our Diocese