

Resolution A111/C035/C049: Economic Justice Ministry for and with Lower Income People

Resolved, That the General Convention affirm and adopt the 7 following actions as the policy and program for Economic Justice of the Episcopal Church during the next six years:

Engage in the traditional acts of mercy in which many congregations and Jubilee Centers participate, such as food pantries, clothing closets, soup kitchens, homeless shelters, and other programs.

Foster “relational culture” in which each congregation develop relationships with the disenfranchised in their community, knowing people by their names, and forming local partnership with agencies that work with people of little income or few financial resources.

Deepen advocacy in concert with the Office of Government Relations for legislation that provides adequate levels of support and opportunities for all people.

Participate in faith-based community organizing whereby people of the local community exercise the power of numbers and their conviction to bring their needs to the attention of elected officials and governmental bodies, thereby encouraging effective policy and action.

Support and participate in various models through which low-income people can take control of their own lives and meet their own needs, such as community development corporations, housing corporations and cooperatives, and small business development.

Encourage at every level of the Episcopal Church the making of loans and deposits at a level of one to ten percent of financial assets to community development financial institutions (community loan funds, community development banks and credit unions, and micro-loan business funds) to support local community development, and where helpful and necessary, for the creation of financial institutions themselves.

Encourage dioceses, congregations, organizations and members to make socially responsible investments in the Episcopal Economic Loan Fund with the goal of obtaining the \$24 million fund established by GC resolution 2000- B037* to support the “community controlled economic development programs of the disadvantaged” (quoted from the Economic Justice Resolution of the 1988 General Convention); and be it further

Resolved, That the secretary of convention communicate this resolution to all dioceses of TEC for implementation and follow-up.

*Resolution Number: 2000-B037

Title: Consider Expansion of Funds Administered by the Economic Justice Loan Committee

Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended

Final Text:

Resolved, That the Executive Council consider the expansion of the \$7 million loan fund administered by its Economic Justice Loan Committee to at least \$24 million dollars; and be it further

Resolved, That the Council consider the following changes:

1. that the current assets of the Fund be placed in a separate loan fund vehicle as a program of ECUSA, including assets (funds not yet loaned), loans receivable, principal, and interest payments;

2. that investments be recruited for the Fund from dioceses, congregations, and other Episcopal organizations;

3. that these investments be matched dollar for dollar by new investments by the budget of the General Convention; and/or that it increase its own contribution to the Loan Fund to 5% of its investment portfolio;

4. that this Fund be commended to the Church Pension Fund and the Episcopal Church Foundation for consideration for staffing and funding; and

5. that sufficient staffing be engaged to administer the loan program from the General Convention budget as well as from income from the Loan Fund itself.

Citation: General Convention, Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Denver, 2000 (New York: General Convention, 2001), p. 652

EXPLANATION

The House of Bishops, in their paper "Economic Justice and the Christian Conscience" published in October, 1987, called for a fundamental reordering of human values "if we are to have any hope of challenging society's present enchantment with overweening individualism, human avarice and social irresponsibility." They went on to say that "The moral imperative for Christians is not so much to offer simple answers to the paradox of a prosperity that generates poverty but rather to seek understanding of how the growth and extent of such poverty constitutes both a moral contradiction and a systemic social flaw that serves to undermine the very prosperity which helped create it. The special challenge to Christians is to commit themselves to a process of informing the conscience of society at large about this paradox and to suggest a variety of ways by which individual Christians in their personal activity and their church in its corporate life can witness." On the basis of this statement the House of Bishops

voted to encourage dioceses to bring forward to the 1988 General Convention resolutions for action on economic justice.

In response to the Bishops' call, the Diocese of Michigan brought the resolution "Taking Action for Economic Justice" to the 1988 General Convention in Detroit, and its adoption significantly impacted the justice ministry of the Episcopal Church at that time. Some dioceses and parishes started community loan funds and credit unions or placed money in already existing investment vehicles. Others created housing development corporations to create low income housing throughout the country. Still others created business incubators and micro-enterprise funds for small business development. Church people involved in service ministries to the poor were often called to an advocacy ministry, to join their voices to those of the poor to demand increased and more effective government and agency services. The landscape of the Episcopal Church Involvement in Economic Justice began to change.

Recently a call was raised for a revised and strengthened economic justice resolution to respond to the pervasive economic crisis, moral contradictions and systemic social flaws we are experiencing twenty years later. Our economy has not been kind to working people and lower income people. Changes in the world economy are literally changing the way we do business. Despite a rising productivity the wages of working people have not risen for more than 20 years. Factories and business have moved overseas, contributing to an untenable unemployment rate here at home. The safety net, that was designed to provide lower income people with basic necessities while they prepared to join or rejoin the workforce, has been seriously weakened. The mortgage foreclosure crisis has deeply challenged the recent trend of irresponsible and unregulated lending. We find ourselves mired in a financial crisis that includes both decrease in income and increases in prices, putting the squeeze on many Americans.

In this 20th year since the adoption of the resolution "Taking Action for Economic Justice" it is time again for the church to act with boldness, compassion and clarity.

Resolution_____ Episcopal Network for Economic Justice

Resolved, The House of _____concurring, That the 76th General Convention fund the Episcopal Network for Economic Justice (ENEJ) at a level of \$100,000 per year for the coming triennium so that it can continue and increase its mission of supporting and assisting economic justice work at every level of the Episcopal Church; and be it further

Resolved, That ENEJ collaborate with and report to the Advocacy Center.

EXPLANATION

The Episcopal Network for Economic Justice is a membership organization that arose out of the work that followed the church's implementation of GC resolution 1988-Taking Action for Economic Justice. The Network consists of individual, congregational and diocesan members. Members work both within the Church and in interfaith coalitions to promote economic justice in their respective communities. The ENEJ with some support from the national Church, has provided educational materials, technical assistance, and ministry models to "Episcopalians engaged in a broad array of economic justice activities. These activities include the formation of credit unions and other wealth-creating programs, organizing and advocating for economic justice, and supporting local worker justice campaigns.

Such funding will provide much needed resources to help ENEJ assist the church in rising to the challenge of the current economic crisis while at the same time providing a stronger partnership with this organization that has arisen from the grass roots of the Episcopal Church