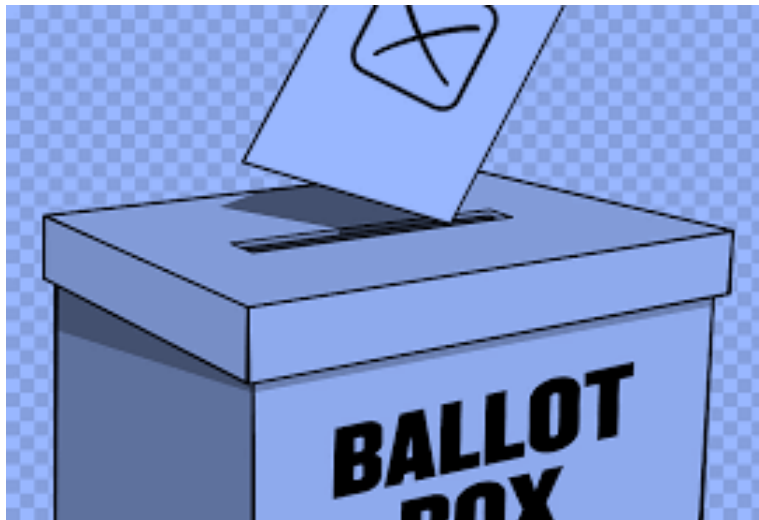
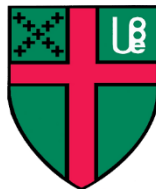


The Episcopal Networks Collaborative

Vote for Justice



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Introduction

By The Rev. Dcn Phina Borgeson

Over the last four years the Episcopal Networks Collaborative has been producing lectionary-based reflections. Meeting via Zoom in late 2019, a member of the working group asked what we might do to support Episcopalians in their preparation for voting in 2020. We learned how in earlier election cycles, the Minnesota Episcopal Environmental Stewardship Commission had disseminated candidate questions as part of an effort called Vote for the Environment. And so the idea for Vote Justice emerged, with a broader scope, considering three key issues of each network in the Collaborative.

The nine short white papers here extend and are consistent with the educational mission of the Collaborative. Too often the appointed lessons for a Sunday or a season avoid the challenging passages which might help us wrestle with how our faith relates to pressing concerns in our nation and world; sometimes a departure from our lectionary-based work is called for. In each of the papers you will find not only a developed statement about a current issue, but references to scripture and TEC resolutions which can help us speak from the perspective of our faith. The suggested candidate questions that follow in each offering provide a springboard for candidate forums, candidate interviews, town halls, and reviewing candidate positions on issues. Many are useful for statewide and local candidates as well as those running for national offices.

As you read the papers, you will see that while each explores one key issue, none can be addressed in isolation. There are many areas of overlap and intersection, an affirmation of why we work together on our concerns.

For example

- Wealth gaps and income inequality impact access to health care.
- Human migration due to climate change may be the result of crises in agriculture or food security, and increasing human migration underscores the need for immigration policy reform.
- Community investing in rural areas could help to reduce the income gap, rural health care disparities, and increase support for local, climate-smart agriculture.
- Voter suppression biases our ability to collectively address every issue.

Each of our authors has shared their knowledge of an issue about which they are passionate, but all of us recognize that our concerns cannot be siloed. We invite you to reflect on and use our work, and to Vote Justice.

Climate Change

By The Rev. Dr. Tom Harries

The Issue

As I'm sure you know, release of carbon dioxide by the burning of fossil fuels and of methane during oil extraction and ruminant ranching and farming, has raised their concentrations in the atmosphere. This in turn causes more of the sun's heat to remain in the atmosphere instead radiating back into space. The shift in balance is causing the atmosphere, land and oceans to heat up.

Hotter temperatures cause numerous problems. Oceans rise, flooding low lying areas that are home to millions of people. More energy in the atmosphere produces more severe storms, increasing property damage and loss of life. In other areas worsening droughts impact agricultural production, human migration, and natural habitats.

Theological Basis for Creation Care

Many strains within Judaism and Christianity support the care of creation. One basis for environmental concern is an appreciation for nature as spiritual inspiration and teacher. Creation care can also be inspired by the incarnation. We understand God's incarnation in Jesus to signal the broader reality of God's presence in the world. We believe God is manifest in this world, where we can experience Holy Presence, and where we have the opportunity to honor God by caring for the least of God's creatures.

In scripture, the most direct statement on the responsibility of human beings for the rest of creation is found in Genesis 2:15 "The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it." (NRSV) The other direct instruction regarding treatment of land and animals is in the Sabbath law. The sabbatical year and Sabbath day instructions specifically include the land, the vineyards, and the animals. All shall be given a chance to rest. (Exodus 23:10-12) Because human impact on the environment was not recognized in biblical times, we don't find much other discussion of creation care per se. What we do find are many positive portrayals of the natural world as a sign of the glory and power of God (Psalms 8 and 19 for example). The apostle Paul includes the whole creation in the salvation accomplished by the death and resurrection of Jesus (Romans 8:19-23).

What does it mean to live in harmony with God's creation? The list of specific steps to be taken and ways of doing things to be adopted is as long as the list of human endeavors. No matter what we do, from farming to mining, from transporting goods and people to sheltering them, from art to zoology, we can do it in more harmony or less harmony with creation. Christians are called to live as much in harmony with nature as possible. We are called in every setting to take action to protect, nurture, and sustain the complex ecological systems of the natural world.

Episcopal Church positions

General Conventions have passed a number of resolutions in support of preventing or reducing climate change. The most recent were at the 2018 Convention: Resolution C020: Carbon Tax "supports public policy to stop further climate change, including a Carbon Fee and Dividend program." And resolution B027: Gender Inclusivity in Climate Change Action "Calls on the Office of Governmental Relations and Episcopal Relief and Development to advocate for gender inclusive climate policies."

In addition, while the US has officially withdrawn from the Paris Climate accord, the Episcopal Church has joined many municipalities and organizations that remain committed to meeting the goals of the accord.

Questions you could ask your representative

- Will you champion a carbon fee and refund program?
 - Many economists think this is the most effective means of reducing the use of fossil fuels.
 - It is revenue neutral: All collected fees (minus operating expenses) would be returned to taxpayers.
- Will you champion continued tax incentives and rebates for rooftop solar, community solar, and electric vehicles?
 - These are not quite yet cost competitive with other vehicles and sources of electricity, but they will be soon, if they are helped to grow to scale.
 - Follow up: Will you require utilities to provide net metering to customers who install solar panels, and prohibit them from charging exorbitant network access fees?
- Will you work to close the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and all national (or state) owned lands to oil exploration?
- Will you champion legislation to require manufacturers to provide for the recapture of substantially all refrigeration gases at the end of equipment service?
 - Surprisingly, one of the largest single sources of greenhouse gas emissions, is the gases used in refrigeration.
- More generally, are you prepared to make combating climate change a top priority in your legislative (or executive) work?
- What other steps would you pursue to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

There are of course many other questions you might want to ask, but these cover the current largest opportunities to begin lowering emissions.

Resources

- For an extensive discussion of creation care foundations in Scripture: <https://sites.google.com/site/tdharries/dmin-project>
- For more information on Episcopal Church environmental resolutions: <https://episcopalclimatenews.com/category/church-policies/>
- For more information on ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions: <https://www.drawdown.org/>
- OGR has an environment series here: <https://episcopalchurch.org/posts/ogr/entire-eppn-creation-care-series>

Climate Change and Agriculture

By Dcn Phina Borgeson

Agriculture is both part of the problem and part of the solution in this time of rapid climate change. How does agriculture contribute to the problem of increased atmospheric greenhouse gasses (GHGs)? How can agriculture decrease its contribution to GHGs and sequester them? What does accelerating climate change mean for the future of a sustainable food supply? And what does our faith say about these issues?

While reporting on climate change tends to emphasize transportation and energy usage, the contribution to (GHGs) from agriculture is often overlooked. Yet research suggests that the global food system contributes twenty-nine percent of GHGs.

In the United States the use of liquid manure storage lagoons at confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs) has been steadily increasing. In California methane emissions from manure management and enteric fermentation account for two-thirds of agricultural GHG emissions.

Overuse of nitrogen fertilizers contributes to atmospheric nitrogen, and with pesticides and herbicides, to agricultural runoff. Coastal and intertidal habitats, such as reefs, mangrove forests, and marshes are destroyed by runoff, causing the loss of these buffers against increasingly frequent extreme weather events and spring tides.

Around the globe, conversion of rain forest to grazing land and to plantations for biofuel crops diminishes natural carbon sinks.

The biggest use of energy in agriculture in drier locales such as California is irrigation systems which often depend on energy from fossil fuels. Energy is also used in storage, processing and transportation of food crops.

But energy is useful in reducing food waste, a major source of GHGs. The World Resources Institute explains “if food loss and waste were its own country, it would be the world’s third-largest emitter—surpassed only by China and the United States.”

Farmers and ranchers have a number of strategies for reducing emissions and sequestering carbon, that is, for moving from a system that is extractive, using up oil and soil at the expense of our future, to resilient practices.

A December 30, 2019, post from The California Climate and Agriculture Network (CalCAN) compared a report from Canada’s National Farmers Union with California initiatives for climate smart agriculture. Some of the common goals are:

- “Encourage use of cover crops, intercropping, multi-cropping, and enhanced rotations.
- “Maximize on-farm renewable-energy production
- “Shift some land into set-aside programs, ecological reserves, and alternative land use systems and reverse the destruction of forests, tree bluffs, shelterbelts, and wetlands.
- “Improve manure management.”

No till practices in both commodity and small-scale farming as well as managing ruminant pasture for carbon sequestration conserve soil and capture carbon. Similar practices used on land planted or grazed for fiber production will also reduce GHGs from agriculture.

Mitigating climate change impacts and increasing food security and food sovereignty (the capacity of a community to feed itself) in a warming world poses challenges and presents opportunities.

A 2009 report on the global picture, *Agriculture at the Crossroads*, proposed supporting the best low tech, sustainable practices in small scale diversified agriculture, often called agroecology.

One key to this in the developing world is ending land grabs. Land seized for food and biofuel production for wealthy nations may satisfy the demands of the privileged, but hurts local food security. The same is true of land used for carbon offsets instead of agriculture.

Maintaining biodiversity on farms and in seed stock is crucial. Preserving the great variety of seeds, in local seed banks and libraries and at the Svalbard Global Seed Vault, is important, as is making new strains available and affordable to all, rather than controlled by agrochemical corporations.

Increasing drought, more frequent severe weather events, a decrease in chill factors necessary for tree fruit production, a loss of pollinators and of pollinator and bloom synchrony, will all require the development of improved crop varieties. Science partnering with and learning from indigenous peoples will multiply the wisdom necessary to local resiliency.

While food waste is heaviest in the global north in the retail and consumer phases of the food supply chain, in the developing world it is in post-harvest storage and transportation. There appropriate and sustainable technology could make the most difference.

In the United States, the future of food will be enhanced by protecting existing agricultural land and promoting urban fringe farming, productive greenbelts, urban pocket farms, rooftop gardens, and other solutions for bringing the food supply closer to where people live. Urban agriculture lowers the transportation “foodprint” and increases food security in the case of disasters, civil unrest, and war.

U.S. voters can also contribute to global food security by advocating for our foreign aid dollars to be spent on funding for appropriate technologies and support for local, sustainable food production, not shipping and dumping our surpluses.

Scripture and Church Teachings

There are many ideas for addressing these concerns from the perspective of faith. The context of much of Hebrew scripture is an agrarian one. Consider the number of laws regarding agriculture in Leviticus, for example, and what we know about gleaning from the book of Ruth. Jewish holidays, many of which have parallels in the Church Year, have their roots in seed times and harvests in the ancient eastern Mediterranean. Again and again, Hebrew Scriptures speak from a triadic relationship among God, humanity, and the land, that is, the rest of creation. Jesus uses images from agriculture in his parables, and his ministry and message were probably particularly attractive to Jewish peasants who had been dispossessed of their land under Roman hegemony.

Some have suggested that exile may be the biblical theme which captures today’s urban humans’ relationship to the food system. In “Eating in Exile” in *Food and Faith*, Norman Wirzba writes

“...to be in exile marks an inability to live peaceably, sustainably, and joyfully in one’s place. Not knowing or loving *where* we are and *who* we are with, we don’t know *how* to live in ways that foster mutual flourishing and delight. More specifically, we don’t know *through our eating* to live sympathetically into the memberships that make creation a life-giving home. As a result, we now face a situation in which industrial, global patterns of food production and

eating are undermining creation's overall health. To be in exile is to find oneself in a world that is increasingly inhospitable and unlivable.”

The Episcopal Church has endorsed the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Goal 2 (Zero Hunger), Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), Goal 12 (Responsible Production and Consumption), and Goal 15 (Life on Land) are particularly applicable to agriculture and the food system.

Two resolutions of the 78th General Convention, 2015-A058 and 2015-A170 are specific to environmental issues and agriculture. From A-058

“We may disagree about what is the greatest threat to human survival on the planet. Should the scarcity of water for drinking and sanitation be our biggest concern, or the challenge to feed a hungry world in an ecologically sustainable way? And which of our excesses put the whole planet in the greatest peril? Is it climate change or the loss of biodiversity that poses the greatest threat to the resilience of life on earth? All these issues are interrelated. In agriculture, to take an example from our managed environment, resilience in the face of climate change will depend on better stewardship of water and increased preservation of the diversity of seed stock available for developing improved crops, while those engaged in agriculture continue to assess their contribution to greenhouse gases, polluted wastewater, and soil erosion, and how all these negative impacts on the environment can be decreased.”

Sample questions of candidates for President of the United States, Senator and Representative

- 1) How do you see agriculture and the food system playing a part in any “green new deal?”
- 2) Which programs would you support to assist American farmers and ranchers in adopting climate smart practices, developing on-farm renewable energy projects, and responding to rapid climate change?
- 3) In the face of climate change, how might USAID do a better job of supporting local agroecology and the key role of women around the globe in small-scale agriculture?

Sample questions of candidates for statewide and local offices

- 1) Recognizing that the wording of questions will need to be adapted to each state's political culture and each locale's role in agriculture, question 2) above is a good place to start.
- 2) In urban and suburban areas: What policies do you feel need to be enacted to encourage urban and greenbelt agriculture, in order to increase food security and reduce climate impacts of our food supply?

Sources and Resources

In the United States, the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition is a good resource. See, for example, their review of presidential hopefuls' positions on climate change and agriculture

<https://sustainableagriculture.net/blog/climate-change-agriculture-presidential-debates/>

or their recent report *Agriculture and Climate Change* https://sustainableagriculture.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/NSAC-Climate-Change-Policy-Position_paper-112019_WEB.pdf

CalCAN, especially “Cultivating Climate Resilience in Farming” <http://calclimateag.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Cultivating-Resilience-August-2019.pdf>

An opinion piece from Alan Sano, a farmer in California's Central Valley

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/09/opinion/climate-change-food-report.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share>

Farmworkers' risk increases from a warming climate

<https://www.ucsusa.org/resources/farmworkers-at-risk>

The National Farmers Union of Canada report

<https://www.nfu.ca/nfu-announces-new-report-tackling-the-farm-crisis-and-the-climate-crisis/>

There is a wealth of research on global agriculture and climate change.

2009 *Agriculture at a Crossroads*, the Global Report of the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development Study, was a project of the World Bank. Note that two agrochemical companies stopped supporting the project when they saw the conclusions being drawn.

The USA, Canada and Australia did not sign on to the report and its recommendations.

<https://www.globalagriculture.org/original-reports.html>

Related work continues by the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food) ipes-food.org. Begin with the short video “How can we feed the world? By asking different questions”

The Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security Research Programme.

<https://ccafs.cgiar.org/news/press-releases/agriculture-and-food-production-contribute-29-percent-global-greenhouse-gas#.XhDV00dKiUk>

An organization supporting appropriate technology <https://bountifield.org/>

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Special Report on Climate Change and Land

<https://www.ipcc.ch/srccl/>

Information of food loss and waste from the World Resources Institute

<https://www.wri.org/blog/2015/12/whats-food-loss-and-waste-got-do-climate-change-lot-actually>

An example of the Oakland Institute’s work for global food sovereignty.

<https://www.oaklandinstitute.org/evicted-carbon-credits-green-resources>

Civil Eats addresses a wide variety of food system issues. Here is their file of climate articles

<https://civileats.com/category/environment/climate/>

And some books

Ellen F. Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: an Agrarian Reading of the Bible*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

Norman Wirzba, *Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

New books and reports on climate change and the food system from Yale Climate Connections.

<https://www.yaleclimateconnections.org/2019/11/13-new-books-and-reports-about-the-future-of-food/>

Timothy A. Wise, *Eating Tomorrow: Agribusiness, Family Farmers and the Future of Food*. (New York: The Free Press, 2019).

Anna Lappe, *Diet for a Hot Planet*. (New York: Bloomsbury USA, 2010).

Environmental Justice, Climate Change, and Migration

By Delia Heck

Statement of Issue

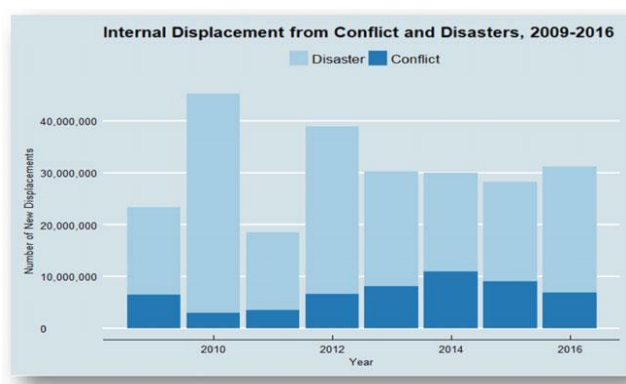
Anthropogenic (or human-caused) climate change is increasing natural resource depletion, desertification, land loss, and rising seas, but also their siblings - violent conflict, persecution, increased forced migration, and growing refugee crises.

Situation

One could argue that in this situation we find encapsulated the mission and ministry priorities of today's Episcopal Church. Racial reconciliation, healing, justice and creation care are deeply connected one to the other, and to the phenomenon of the growing refugee crisis. One need only ask and answer honestly the following questions to see the connection laid bare:

- Who are today's refugees and displaced people?
- Why are they being forced to flee their homes?
- What caused or led to the conflict or persecution that forced them to flee? What historical events, decisions, and policies contributed, over time, to this catastrophe?

The United Nations identifies migrants and refugees based upon their motivation and destination. Motivation depends upon whether the “push or pull factors” are voluntary or out of fear or serious harm. The destination is divided between internal and international locations. These classifications can be further refined within the environmental or climate framework. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) defines **environmental migrant** as anyone who for reasons of abrupt or progressive changes in the environment that adversely affect their lives or living conditions, are pushed to leave their usual homes, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, and who move either within their territory or across international borders (IOM, 2017). An **environmental refugee** is someone who, due to environmental factors, is forced to flee their territory crossing international borders, whereas an environmental Internally Displaced Person (IDP) is also forced to leave home, but remains within the state of which he/she is a national.

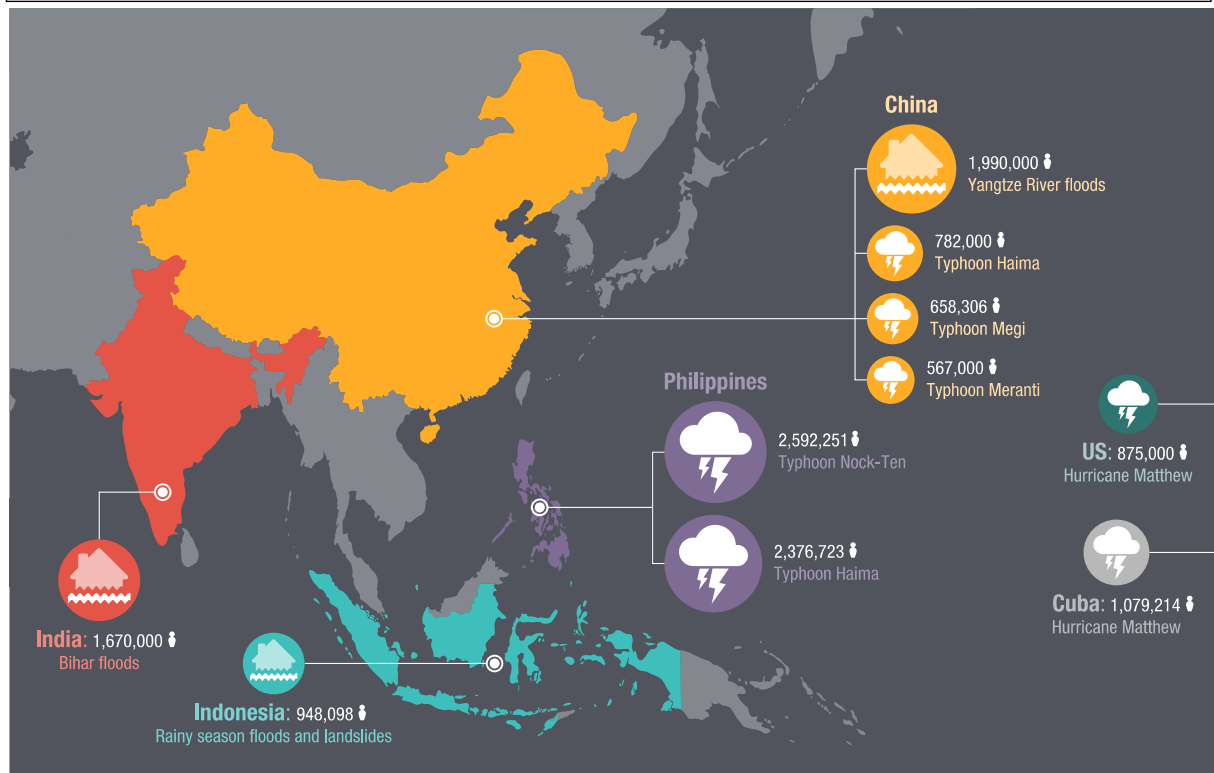


New internal displacements per year from conflict and natural disasters. *Data Source:* Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 2016

		Motivation	
		Voluntary	Fear of Serious Harm
Destination	Internal	Internal Migrant	Internally Displaced Person (IDP)
	International	Migrant	Refugee

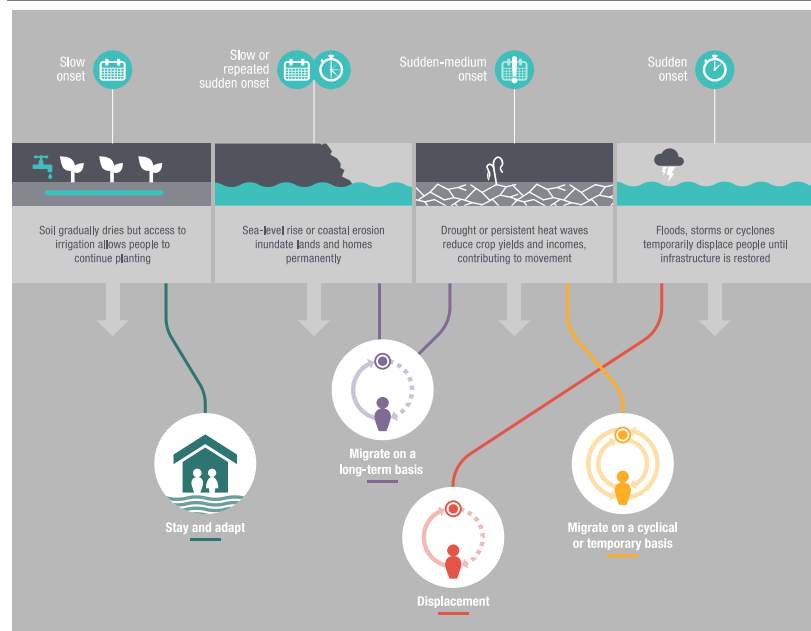
UN migration-related terminology by motivation and destination. *Source:* United Nations

The ten largest displacement events of 2016 were climate-related



Source: IDMC database (2017)

Possible mobility responses to different climate hazards



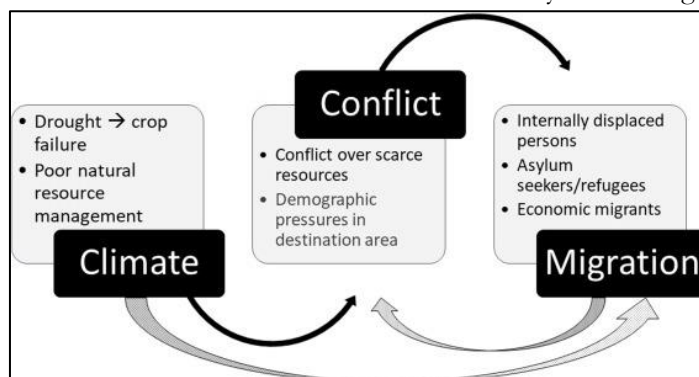
From 2009 to 2016, overwhelmingly internal displacement was a result of natural disasters. In 2016 alone, the ten largest displacement events were climate-related. However, Stapleton et al. (2017) have argued that directly attributing human mobility to climate change is extremely difficult. Rather they contend that people move for a combination of reasons, and, even when environmental hazards contribute to this decision, it is often the underlying socioeconomic, cultural, political and environmental processes that are enabling or constraining a person's ability to manage where they are or causes them to move.

Foresti et al. (2018) have identified four categories of environmental migrants:

1. Those displaced by climate-related disasters, often move temporarily;
2. Those forced to migrate more permanently due to recurrent events;
3. Those forced to migrate to avoid worsening slow-onset deterioration of the environment; and
4. Those who ‘choose’ to move as an adaptation strategy, in response to environmental pressures and other factors.

Between 2008 and 2015, an average of 25.4 million per year were displaced by disasters within and across borders (Stapleton et al, 2017). Those that are forced to move often lose property, crops and other resources in the disaster and during the move. While the large majority of environmental migrants fall into the first category, increasingly climate displacement is repeated or for longer periods of time, particularly when extreme weather and related events such as flooding become more frequent.

In terms of Climate, Conflict and Migration there is a more direct link. In 2014, the IPCC’s Fifth Assessment Synthesis Report identified rapid growing population, overcrowding, unemployment and increased inequality as pressure mechanisms on urban centers that contribute to the breakout of political unrest. When this occurs, the effect of anthropogenic climate change on the frequency and intensity of extreme events is likely to increase the risk of violent conflicts by intensifying drivers such as poverty, food insecurity and inequalities (IPCC, 2014). A recent study by Abel et al. (2019) established a causal link from climate to conflict and asylum-seeking when conflict already exists in a region. Thus, climate change is not likely to generate asylum seeking everywhere but more often in a country undergoing political transformation where that conflict embodies a form of people’s discontent towards an inefficient response of the government to climate impacts.



“The relationship between climate change, conflict and migration is likely to follow the sequence of climate change exacerbating human conflict due to **competition over scarce resources**. For instance, recurrent severe droughts due to climate change can lead to conflict and instability in a country with poor management of natural resources. Consequently, climate induced conflict outbreak drives displacement and outmigration. Fig. 1 also presents a possibility of the reverse causation depicted by grey arrows whereby climate change first drives outmigration and subsequently migrant pressure contributes to conflict.” (Abel et al, 2019)

Scripture and Church Teachings

Hebrews 13:2 – Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.

Leviticus 19:33-34 and 24:22 – When the alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.”

Deuteronomy 10:18-19 – “For the Lord your God...loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Matthew 25:31-46 – “...I was a stranger and you welcomed me.”

Luke 4:16-21 – “...Bring good news to the poor...release to the captives...sight to the blind...let the oppressed go free.”

Romans 12:13 – “Mark of the true Christian: “...Extend hospitality to strangers...”

It is into this landscape that the Episcopal Church is well positioned to help meet the needs of a hurting and broken world. We are at a pivotal moment in our life as a Church, speaking into global and national political conversations about what it means to follow Jesus’ Way of Love, what it means to respect the dignity of every human being. In the face of climate change denial, we are called to speak Truth. In the face of racism, discrimination, and prejudice in our culture, in our institutions, and in our policies, we are called to Become Beloved Community. In the face of militarization of borders, denial of refugees’ and asylum-seekers’ human rights, and the US government’s withdrawal from refugee resettlement and drastic changes to immigration policy, we are called to stand and act for humane response, welcome, and integration. In the face of seemingly intractable problems and political paralysis, we are called to foster civil discourse.

Questions to Ask

1. What initiatives do you support to address the needs of migrants displaced from their homes due to climate factors?
2. How might our community/state/country provide resources to assist individuals within our community/state/country impacted by climate change?
3. Describe the policies you would introduce to handle increased instances of climate-based migration in the future?
4. What policies focused on mitigation efforts and/or adaptation strategies do you espouse in order to deal with the underlying causes of climate-based migration?

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Stapleton, et al. (2017) Climate Change, migration and displacement: The need for a risk-informed and coherent approach. Overseas Development Institute (London) and United Nations Development Programme (New York).

The Issues of the Wage Gap & Income Inequality

By Joe McDaniel, Jr.

There are a wide variety of types of economic inequality, most notably measured using the distribution of income (the amount of money people are paid) and the distribution of wealth (the amount of wealth people own).

First, let's address the Wage Gap Issue. One-quarter of American workers make less than \$10 per hour. That creates an income below the federal poverty level. These are the people who wait on you every day. They include cashiers, fast food workers, and nurse's aides. The rich got richer through the recovery from the 2008 financial crisis. In 2012, the top 10% of earners took home 50% of all income. That's the highest percentage in the last 100 years. The top 1% took home 20% of the income, according to a study by economists Emmanuel Saez and Thomas Piketty.

By 2015, America's top 10% already averaged more than nine times as much income as the bottom 90%. And Americans in the top 1% averaged more than 40 times more income than the bottom 90%.

From 2000 through 2018, the number of Americans living in poverty increased 15%. By 2018, almost 33 million workers earned less than \$10 per hour. Their average annual income is less than \$25,750. This is below the poverty level for a family of four.

Most of these low-wage workers receive no health insurance, sick days, or pension plans from their employers. They can't get ill and have no hope of retiring. The resultant health care inequality increases the cost of medical care for everyone. People who can't afford preventive care wind up in the hospital emergency room. In 2009, half of the people (46.3%) who used a hospital said they went because they had no other place to go. They use the emergency room as their primary care physician. The hospitals passed this cost along to Medicaid. Despite the existence of The Affordable Care Act approximately 30 Million Americans remain uninsured.

Now, let's turn our attention to the Wealth Gap Issue. We equate wealth with "net worth," the sum total of your assets minus liabilities. Assets can include everything from an owned personal residence and cash in savings accounts to investments in stocks and bonds, real estate, and retirement accounts. Liabilities cover what a household owes: a car loan, credit card balance, student loan, mortgage, or any other bill yet to be paid. In the United States, wealth inequality runs even more pronounced than income inequality.

The most visible indicator of wealth inequality in America today may be the Forbes magazine list of the nation's 400 richest. In 2018, the three men at the top of that list — Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, Microsoft founder Bill Gates, and investor Warren Buffett — held combined fortunes worth more than the total wealth of the poorest half of Americans.

In 1982, the "poorest" American listed on the first annual Forbes magazine list of America's richest 400 had a net worth of \$210 million in today's dollars. The average member of that first list had a net worth of \$590 million. In 2018, rich Americans needed net worth of \$2.1 billion to enter the Forbes 400, and the average member held a net \$7.2 billion, over 10 times the 1982 average after adjusting for inflation. Inequality is skyrocketing even within the Forbes 400 list of America's richest. In today's dollars, the net worth of the richest member of the Forbes 400 has soared from \$5 billion in 1982 to \$160 billion in 2018, far outpacing the gains at either the Forbes 400 entry point or average. Since 1982, just seven men have held this spot: shipping magnate Daniel Ludwig (1982), oil executive Gordon Getty (1983-1984), Walmart founder Sam Walton (1985-1988), media company owner John Kluge (1989-1991), Microsoft founder Bill Gates (1992-2017, except 1993), investor Warren Buffett (1993), and Amazon founder Jeff Bezos (2018).

Over the past three decades, America's most affluent families have added to their net worth, while those on the bottom have dipped into "negative wealth," meaning the value of their debts exceeds the value of their assets.

Over the past century, the share of America's wealth held by the nation's wealthiest has changed markedly. That share peaked in the late 1920s, right before the Great Depression, then fell by more than half over the next three decades. But the equalizing trends of the mid 20th century have now been almost completely undone. At the top of the American economic summit, the richest of the nation's rich now hold as large a wealth share as they did in the 1920s.

The rich don't just have more wealth than everyone else. The bulk of their wealth comes from different — and more lucrative — asset sources. America's top 1 percent, for instance, holds more than half the national wealth invested in stocks and mutual funds. Most of the wealth of Americans in the bottom 90 percent comes from their principal residences, the asset category that took the biggest hit during the Great Recession. These Americans also hold almost three-quarters of America's debt.

The median Black family, with just over \$3,500, owns just 2 percent of the wealth of the nearly \$147,000 the median White family owns. The median Latino family, with just over \$6,500, owns just 4 percent of the wealth of the median White family. Put differently, the median White family has 41 times more wealth than the median Black family and 22 times more wealth than the median Latino family.

Families that have zero or even "negative" wealth (meaning the value of their debts exceeds the value of their assets) live on the edge, just one minor economic setback away from tragedy. Black and Latino families are much more likely to be in this precarious situation. The proportion of Black families with zero or negative wealth rose by 8.5 percent to 37 percent between 1983 and 2016. The proportion of Latino families with zero or negative net worth declined by 19 percent over the past 30 years but is still more than twice as high as the rate for Whites.

As with total wealth, homeownership is heavily skewed towards White families. In 2016, 72 percent of White families owned their home, compared to just 44 percent of Black families. Between 1983 and 2016, Latino homeownership increased by a dramatic nearly 40 percent, but it remains far below the rate for Whites, at just 45 percent.

That is just one of many eye-watering measures of inequality. Consider that in the US, almost 85 per cent of the wealth is owned by just 20 per cent of the population, and the bottom 40 per cent own just 0.3 per cent of it. In 1960, a chief executive in the US typically earned 20 times as much as an average worker. Today it is more like 354 times.

Most people find these numbers shocking, even obscene, and inequality has become one of the world's most serious issues. Early in his second term, President Obama called it "the defining challenge of our time" and Pope Francis has described it as "the root of social evil".

Scripture

The Bible says plenty about helping the poor: Luke 6:38 says, "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you; and Proverbs 3:27-28: Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act. Do not say to your neighbor, "Come back tomorrow and I'll give it to you"—when you already have it with you; and in Proverbs 28:27: Those who give to the poor will lack nothing, but those who close their eyes to them receive many curses. In addition, General Convention, throughout the years, has passed many Resolutions which address issues pertaining to the issue at hand, including but not limited to the following: 2015- C045, A092, A093.

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Question Posed:

Given that the wealthiest one percent of American households own 40 percent of the country's wealth, which is higher than it has been at any point since at least 1962, and that from 2013, the share of wealth owned by the 1 percent shot up by nearly three percentage points and that the wealth owned by the bottom 90 percent fell over the same period, which means that today, the top 1 percent of households own more wealth than the bottom 90 percent combined. What are your plans to address income equality and the wealth gap in this country?

The Shortcomings in the First Step Act

By Joe McDaniel, Jr.

It is evident that the First Step Act has had an impact in the one year since its enactment. As Bureau of Prisons (BOP) officials recently testified, 3,100 people have been sent home from prison based on the “good conduct time” provision that makes those in prison eligible for early release if they demonstrate good behavior while incarcerated. In addition, as of a week before such Congressional Testimony a little over 2,100 people have received sentence reductions because an earlier law — the Fair Sentencing Act (FSA) — was made retroactive by the First Step Act. The FSA significantly reduced the sentencing disparities that existed between users of crack cocaine and powder cocaine, and about 100 additional people have received sentence reductions because of a First Step compassionate release provision that affords these reductions to the elderly and sick.

The First Step Act’s reduction of mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses and expansion of judicial discretion for some mandatory minimum sentences is also a step in the right direction. The act recognizes the humanity of those in prison by eliminating practices like juvenile solitary confinement and the shackling of pregnant women.

The continued and long-term impact of the First Step Act, however, will depend on the implementation of several provisions in the law.

The law requires that the Department of Justice (DOJ) create a risk and needs assessment tool to determine the number of incarcerated people eligible for early release and rehabilitative programming. In order to keep sending people home from prison, it’s critical that the DOJ does not create a tool that perpetuates the criminal justice system’s racial and gender disparities.

As Professor Melissa Hamilton explained at the Congressional Hearing, with the tool’s current design, “African-American males are far less likely to ever earn the best incentives and rewards from the First Step Act.” Andrea James of the National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls also testified that she “is skeptical that this system can be implemented in a way that fully respects the individual circumstances and background of each incarcerated person,” particularly women. The American Civil Liberties Union and coalition partners continue to caution DOJ on its current approach to the tool and as members of Congress demanded at the hearing, DOJ must make the tool both transparent and accessible.

Additionally, the BOP must provide the rehabilitative and reentry programming that the law requires. Successful participation in this programming can determine whether or not someone in prison becomes eligible for early release to a halfway house. Essentially, without that programming, no one goes home. As the ACLU and other partner organizations have called for, Congress has committed \$75 million to BOP and DOJ to implement programming associated with the First Step Act. But at the recent hearing, Kathleen Hawk Sawyer, director of the Bureau of Prisons, put that number in context and said: “we’ll need \$75 million more.”

John Walters of the Hudson Institute reiterated the director’s comments, saying \$75 million is just a “small drop in the bucket” that amounts to only “\$400 per person.” According to Walters, it would take at least four times that amount to “meet the high expectations” set by the First Step Act. It is abundantly clear that the success of the First Step Act is contingent upon sufficient funding, and Congress and the administration cannot afford to shortchange this law.

Finally, the sentencing provisions of the First Step Act must be made retroactive. Just as we've seen the immediate impact of making the Fair Sentencing Act retroactive, we will see a similar effect by remedying the unjust mandatory minimum sentences of the past. In recognizing the error of its ways, Congress needs to ensure that its new law provides relief to all those impacted, not just those who were sentenced at the right time when laws were reformed. Legislation must be advanced to make the First Step Act retroactive.

As Chairwoman Karen Bass (D-Calif.) recognized at the hearing, "we are just at the beginning of a very long process." And, as Ranking Member Guy Reschenthaler (R-Pa.) said, "if not implemented correctly, there will be no subsequent steps." The First Step Act was exactly that — a first step.

Scripture

According to the Gospel of Matthew, when Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment is, he said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." Certainly, an argument can be made that treating prisoners in a just manner is consistent with this Commandment. In addition, General Convention through the years has passed numerous resolutions dealing with the topic of mass incarceration including, but not limited to 2015-A011, A183, and C019, and in 2018-D004.

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The Washington Times, How the Senate First Step Act is flawed, Tom Cotton, Thursday, November 29, 2018.

The First Step Act of 2018: An Overview - FAS.org.

Question Posed

The FIRST STEP Act was a critical win in the fight to reduce mass incarceration because it's the largest step the federal government has taken to reduce the number of people in federal custody. However, the federal government remains the nation's leading incarcerator, with more people under the custody of the Federal Bureau of Prisons than any single state. The problem is that it leaves significant mandatory minimum sentences in place. In addition, two of the bill's key sentencing provisions are not retroactive, which minimizes their overall impact. Given those facts, what would you do to address these shortcomings in The First Step Act?

The Issue of Voter Suppression

By Joe McDaniel, Jr.

Voter suppression is a strategy used to influence the outcome of an election by discouraging or preventing specific groups of people from voting. It is distinguished from political campaigning in that campaigning attempts to change likely voting behavior by changing the opinions of potential voters through persuasion and organization. Voter suppression, instead, attempts to reduce the number of voters who might vote against a candidate or proposition.

The tactics of voter suppression range from minor changes to make voting less convenient, to physically intimidating and even physically attacking prospective voters, which is illegal. Voter suppression can be effective if a significant number of voters are intimidated or disenfranchised.

In the United States, elections are administered locally, and forms of voter suppression vary among jurisdictions. At the founding of the country, the right to vote in most states was limited to property-owning white males. Over time, the right to vote was formally granted to racial minorities, women, and youth. During the later 20th and early 21st centuries, Southern states passed Jim Crow laws to suppress poor and racial minority voters – such laws included poll taxes, literacy tests, and grandfather clauses. Most of these voter suppression tactics were made illegal after the enactment of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. In 2013, discriminatory voter ID laws arose following the Supreme Court's decision to strike down Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act, which some argue amount to voter suppression among African Americans.

In Texas, a voter ID law requiring a driver's license, passport, military identification, or gun permit, was repeatedly found to be intentionally discriminatory. The state's election laws could be put back under the control of the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ). Under former Attorney General Jeff Sessions, however, the DOJ expressed support for Texas's ID law. Sessions had previously been accused by Coretta Scott King in 1986 of trying to suppress the black vote. A similar ID law in North Dakota, which would have disenfranchised large numbers of Native Americans, was also overturned.

In Wisconsin, a federal judge found that the state's restrictive voter ID law led to "real incidents of disenfranchisement, which undermine rather than enhance confidence in elections, particularly in minority communities"; and, given that there was no evidence of widespread voter impersonation in Wisconsin, found that the law was "a cure worse than the disease." In addition to imposing strict voter ID requirements, the law cut back on early voting, required people to live in a ward for at least 28 days before voting, and prohibited emailing absentee ballots to voters.

Other controversial measures include shutting down Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) offices in minority neighborhoods, making it more difficult for residents to obtain voter IDs; shutting down polling places in minority neighborhoods; systematically depriving precincts in minority neighborhoods of the resources they need to operate efficiently, such as poll workers and voting machines; and purging voters from the rolls shortly before an election.

Often, voter fraud is cited as a justification for such laws even when the incidence of voter fraud is low. In Iowa, lawmakers passed a strict voter ID law with the potential to disenfranchise 260,000 voters. Out of 1.6 million votes cast in Iowa in 2016, there were only 10 allegations of voter fraud; none were cases of impersonation that a voter ID law could have prevented. Iowa Secretary of State Paul Pate, the architect of the bill, admitted, "We've not experienced widespread voter fraud in Iowa."

In May 2017, President Donald Trump established the Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity, purportedly for the purpose of preventing voter fraud. Critics suggested its true purpose was voter suppression. The commission was led by Kansas secretary of state Kris Kobach, a staunch advocate of strict

voter ID laws and a proponent of the Crosscheck system. Crosscheck is a national database designed to check for voters who are registered in more than one state by comparing names and dates of birth. Researchers at Stanford University, the University of Pennsylvania, Harvard University, and Microsoft found that for every legitimate instance of double registration it finds, Crosscheck's algorithm returns approximately 200 false positives. Kobach had been repeatedly sued by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) for trying to restrict voting rights in Kansas. In 2018, after tremendous pressure, the Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity was formally disbanded without finding any examples of Voter Fraud.

Scripture

According to the Gospel of Matthew, when Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment is, he said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." Certainly, an argument can be made that allowing every citizen to exercise his/her constitutional right to vote is consistent with this Commandment. In addition, our Baptismal Covenant requires us to respect the dignity of every human being and not allowing a certain segment of the population to vote is inconsistent with this covenant. In addition, General Convention through the years has passed numerous resolutions addressing this topic, including, but not limited to 2012-C033, 2006-A094 and in 2018-D003.

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Question Posed

Since Section 4 of The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was struck down in the 2013 Supreme Court Shelby Case various statewide Voter ID Legislation has been adopted, which some argue amounts to voter suppression among African Americans. Given this fact, what are your plans to address the issue of voter suppression?

Immigration: The Special Role of the Church in the Interdisciplinary Work for Compassionate and Humane Immigration Policy

By Dianne Aid

Introduction

The Episcopal Church has spoken prophetically for comprehensive and humane immigration public policy and on creating solidarity and love for immigrants in our communities.

Since early 2017 immigration practice and policy in the United States has become punitive towards people fleeing from violence, starvation and destructive environmental practices which have destroyed ancient small farm agricultural driving primarily indigenous communities off their lands and looking northward to support their families.

This paper is intended to be a broad statement on what the Church has committed to and can advocate for in the future. Basically, this is a “roadmap” to measure a humane response and advocacy for local community action and Federal policy.

Comprehensive, Compassionate Immigration Reform

The Episcopal Church along with interfaith partners supports the following points of immigration reform:

Family Reunification

Immigration to the United States must continue to focus on family reunification as its priority (this is currently under threat as the current administration supports individual merit-based immigration based on skills instead of relationships)

Worker Justice

Immigrant workers are to be treated fairly in work including fair wages, safe working conditions and the right to organize.

Due Process

Due process includes the right to be represented by legal counsel in immigration hearings. Up until recent weeks immigration into the United States was considered an administrative matter, but the language we are now hearing says it is to become a criminal matter. Therefore, free legal counsel should be available for those who cannot afford an attorney.

A Pathway to Citizenship

Many undocumented adults have been in the United States since they were small children. They now have families of their own; their children are US Citizens. We need to end the fear of deportation that is ever present in mixed status families. School teachers report of the fear that so many of their students have that they will go home one day to find that their mother or father has been taken into ICE custody.

Sanctuary

The Episcopal Church has supported Sanctuary Movements of The Interfaith Immigration Coalition. Traditional Sanctuary involves hospitality, offering a safe place for members of families who have active immigration cases so that they have a way of gaining legal status in the United States. ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) under a 2011 Memorandum of Agreement will not enter religious centers, schools and medical facilities. This is not a law but a policy. Churches who take people into Sanctuary need to be

public about it, therefore not harboring undocumented or at-risk immigrants. Providing Sanctuary goes back as far as our faith communities have existed and is part of the Leviticus laws of early Jewish Communities. Sanctuary is a ministry of accompaniment and can take other forms than housing someone inside of a church. Members of faith communities accompanying immigrants to immigration court gives a good statement of community support and often results in lower bonds being granted and positive judgements. Members of Sanctuary organizations (there is a network through The Interfaith Immigration Coalition through Church World Service) often hold vigils. The language of vigil is more hopeful and does not carry the hostility with it that protest does.

Sanctuary Cities have been in the news a lot over the last few years and it has become a show down between cities, states and the Federal Government. There is no clear definition of what makes up a Sanctuary City. Local communities are asking that local police serve as community police and not carry out the work of Federal Law Enforcement. It does not mean that local jails will not turn over violent felons or immigrants with immigration warrants. It is well known by immigrant rights activists that immigrants are more likely to report crimes if they have trust in the local police. In most communities' immigrants are long time upstanding members of their communities and once again families are often mixed with undocumented members, legal residents and US Citizens. We want our communities to be safe places for families.

Undocumented Immigrants Brought to the United States as Children

Young adult immigrants who were brought to the United States with their families are currently in limbo. They have grown up in the United States. Commonly called "Dreamers" these young people are on the brink of developing skills in the rapidly expanding technological world. It is inhumane to deport these young people back to a country they do not know. Those who "came out of the shadows" under president Obama have voluntarily put themselves in deportation proceedings but under the Obama policy the deportation is deferred. Temporary program that impacts young adults are those who are here on Protected Status (TPS). Their situation is like the Deferred Action in that the US government determines the country of origin is no longer a safety risk. Young people who came in on TPS have grown up in the United States and face similar challenges to those that the Dreamers face.

DACA, under the Trump Administration, has left DACA recipients in limbo. No new DACA applications are being accepted and the Constitutionality of DACA is being battled out in the courts.

Border Issues

As of this writing we are witnessing the biggest humanitarian crisis of immigration policy in recent years. Children are being literally ripped from their parent's arms at the border and being thrown into child detention centers. People are numb, speechless, but we cannot rest there. Many Americans are embracing this policy. We must act.

Rebecca Linder Blachly, M.Div, Director of the Episcopal Church Office of Government Relations said, "We deplore the separation of families at the border as an instrument of U.S. policy, and our hearts cry out for the unnecessary anguish we are putting young children through in an effort to deter border crossings. Separating children from their parents is both inhumane and ineffective, and is at odds with the priority of families within the Christian tradition. Many of those who present themselves at our borders are fleeing violence and seeking asylum in the U.S. We have an obligation under international law to uphold due process for those claiming asylum. The Episcopal Church strongly believes that U.S. policies must provide dignity and respect to all children of God and we urge Congress and the Administration to reverse these harmful policies that separate families and endanger children.

Questions

1. What can local communities do to promote just and compassionate treatment of immigrants?
2. What can our state government do to promote just and compassion treatment of immigrants?
3. What can our federal government do to promote just and compassionate treatment of immigrants?

On Being a Resource

For more information on the New Sanctuary Movement, see Within These walls, a paper by Dianne Aid, TSSF, Economic and Social Justice Issue Papers, 2018 Edition. www.enej.org/publications (pages 71-74)

Be in touch with the Episcopal Office of Government Relations. Sign up for alerts at www.eppn.org.

Make calls, send emails and faxes to Congressional Representatives and Senators

Form relationships with local immigrant communities, host community dinners and together organize for action in local communities.

Consider becoming a Board of Immigration Appeals Accredited Representative and recognized Agency. BIA accredited people are able to help with some immigration forms and represent immigrants in immigration court.

Walk humbly with God and listen for the stirring of the spirit as you go out to love and serve and accompany the immigrant.

Equitable access to quality health care based on need

By Laura Russell

Everyone has heard the debate on health care. Some say the Affordable Care Act was a miracle. Others say it hurt them financially. Some ask for Medicare for all. Others say it would overburden the system. The debate continues. Unfortunately as it continues, people continue to get sick, and even die.

The United States lags behind most developed nations in providing health care. The U.S. life expectancies have dropped for the last two years in a row, with the life expectancy of women regressing at a faster pace. The U.S. child mortality rates are the worst among the top twenty wealthiest countries. The United States is worse for maternal health than we were twenty-five years ago, with 50,000 preventable deaths or near-deaths occurring annually. The U.S. has seen a 70% increase in maternal mortality in the past twenty years.

And these facts, many of which show the regression of health care, are only compounded when you add poverty and race to the mix. Poverty tends to yield higher burdens on women and girls' health. And race, also exacerbates the problems. African-American women are three to four times more likely to die in child birth than Caucasian women. Even education does not equalize these results. African-American women with advanced degrees are more likely to lose their baby than Caucasian women with less than an eighth grade education. Regional disparities in the availability of health care also exist. Mortality rates have actually increased in some states.

These are just a few facts about the current system of health care. The reality is that the United States has a poor system for the distribution of health care.

Health Care is a Right

Health care is, in fact, a human right. Everyone in the bottom 90% of wealth are fundamentally undermined if they cannot function effectively, which includes working, because of lack of access to health care. It is inhumane to deny health care to individuals, and it is economically and social destructive. By denying health care, one cannot work, cannot care for a family and cannot support themselves. That creates for a person, who was middle class, an income at or below the poverty guideline. Without health care, you are simply pushing more people into poverty.

Health Care needs to be equitable based on need, not gender or race

Race and gender discrimination exist in health care. For example, women of color with cervical cancer—a disease that can be easily prevented and cured—have a lower survival rate than Caucasian women, due to later diagnosis and treatment differences. The US has the highest maternal mortality rate among wealthy countries. In one city, the rate for women of color to die in child birth was 12 times higher than that for Caucasian women.

Through equitable access to health care, possibly by a single payer system, we could eliminate the discrepancies in health care for gender and race. The amount health care providers would be paid would be equal, thus creating a single tiered payment plan. Currently, health care insurers pay for items at varying rates, and some pay more for certain items. This creates an inequity in the system. A single payer option would create one system for all. At single-payer's core is the age-old principle of basic human equality, translated to the arena of health. "Health care is a basic human right,"

Health Care needs to be available everywhere

Health care costs are often notably higher in rural communities. There are many reasons for this, included lack of market competition and lack of providers. Colorado, for example, has documented a nearly 36%

differential in the annual cost of services for individuals in its “mountain communities” versus in the rating area including Boulder, its lowest-cost region.

When health care costs are high, everyone suffers. People pay more for insurance, and very often, go without. Rural communities, in general, have higher rates of poverty, so insurance is unaffordable. Without patients, health care providers go elsewhere. This leaves a community with no doctor, no hospital and no hope. In some states mortality rates are actually increasing.

If insurance was be a basic human right, we would all be entitled. And, it could cost the same regardless of region. Therefore, patients would have insurance and the ability to see a doctor. More health care providers would stay and there would be equality and availability for all, not just for the people in a densely populated area.

Health Care should be based on need

Americans often do not get the care they need even though the United States spends more money per person on health care than any other nation in the world. Preventive care is underutilized, resulting in higher spending on complex, advanced diseases. Some patients will be over-served because of incomes or insurance. Health care is based on ability to pay for procedures, not need.

As a basic human right, health care should be based on need. The need for universal and equitable access to good quality health care that allows for equal utilization for those with equal need is a must. Without it, those who can pay will supersede those who need medical help.

What does The Episcopal Church say?

Since 2009, The Episcopal Church has advocated for basic healthcare to all (Resolutions 2009-C071, 2009-D048, 2009-D088). The Church has advocated that we have a universal health care system, which would be able to insure everyone who needed insurance. Even recently, in 2015 and 2018, The Episcopal Church reaffirmed its belief in Medicaid and Medicare, and advocated for equal access to health care regardless of gender (Resolutions 2015-A092, 2018-D032).

The current state of the Affordable Care Act

The current challenge, and one that looms large for the ACA, comes from Texas, as well as other states, who claim that now without its individual mandate, the ACA is unconstitutional and should be struck. The Attorney General of the United States agrees. Though some states, and politicians, want the ACA struck down, no one has come up with a viable alternative. There is no agreement as to how to handle the uninsured, those with pre-existing conditions or the underinsured.

Questions to ask the Candidates

1. Is health insurance a basic human right? If not, why not?
2. Do you support the Affordable Care Act? If not, what do you see as a viable replacement?
3. Do you believe in Medicare for all? How do feel it should be funded? Do you feel it has any limitations? IF so, what and how can they be fixed?

Some resources

https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_National_Health_Care_Act

<https://www.webmd.com/health-insurance/news/20191120/medicare-for-all-faq>

<https://www.healthcare.gov/glossary/affordable-care-act/>

Community Investing

By Michael Maloney

Community investing is required because there has been systematic disinvestment and exploitation in many urban neighborhoods and rural regions such as Appalachia and the Deep South. Some of the disinvestment has been racially motivated, e.g., federal housing policy that denied loans to African Americans. In the south, a white ruling class acted to appropriate land from black families. In Appalachia, extractive resources such as coal and timber produced wealth for outside corporate investors leaving poverty behind when the resources were depleted. Deindustrialization, globalization, and automation left towns and cities across America without an economic base. Note: See our related papers by Joe McDaniel on income inequality (**The Issues of the Wage Gap & Income Inequality**) and Phina Borgeson on the environmental impacts of these economic trends (**Climate Change and Agriculture** and **Environmental Justice, Climate Change and Migration**).

Community Investing is the broad term referring to making loans to organizations which in turn make loans – provide credit where it has been denied – in low income communities around the world. Community investing involves deposits or loans to Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) which include community development credit unions, community development banks, or community development loan funds and microfinance funds.

Community investors usually have two motives in addition to needed financial return albeit at less than market rate. They also seek to personally integrate their values and their money and to change the world through social impact.

Episcopalian and social investment leader Amy Domini said “investors’ money greases the wheels of finance which provide the world with food, clothing, shelter, and education.” They do this by financing community owned small business, cooperatives, low-cost housing, and nonprofit facilities.

Community investment performances historically have been excellent even though they are traditionally defined as high risk.

The Calvert Foundation with \$434 million in assets in January 2020 could be called a community investment mutual fund. With investors’ money they have made loans to 240 of the highest quality CDFIs and their notes are now available through more than 400 brokerage houses around the country. Gradually more financial advisors are becoming familiar with community investing.

Community Investing is now for everyone! Individuals can invest as little as \$25 on-line at <MicroPlace.com>. Individuals or parishes or dioceses can ‘community invest’ a portion of what they hold in traditional banks by contacting a CDFI – including federally insured banks or credit unions near to home or by providing funds for microfinance loans far away.

In 1988, The Episcopal Church set up a loan fund using \$7 million of its invested funds. This Economic Justice Loan Fund is now managed by Opportunity Finance Network which is the industry association for CDFIs. The promotion of community investing throughout TEC is a priority program of the Episcopal Network for Economic Justice (www.enej.org). Please contact us.

For complete information including contact information for CDFIs in all parts of the country, go to the Social Investment Forum at www.socialinvest.org.

Local Alternative Initiatives

Some congregations want to invest directly in local community development efforts without going through a CDFI which meets U.S. Treasury Department standards. Local Initiatives over the past 30 years have sprung up throughout the country. Some use conventional approaches, some use alternative approaches.

Alternative initiatives have taken the form of such organizations as the Economics of Compassion Initiative of Cincinnati (www.economicsofcompassion.org). Such initiatives reject the idea of the free market economy based on profit and competition and seek to build a new economic system based on such ideas as jubilee and debt forgiveness. Gurus of this approach include theologian Walter Brueggemann and community organizer Peter Block. (see *An Other Kingdom: Departing the Consumer Culture* by Block, Brueggemann, McKnight).

Theologian Ched Myers offers an approach called Sabbath Economics (www.bcm-net.org). Myers wants to move investment “from Wall Street to Main Street,” putting capital to work in low income communities. This approach is described in Myers book (see Resources below) and video.

Though biblically based, Myers’ approach seems consistent with that of the Calvert Foundation.

Conventional Approaches

Conventional approaches use the dynamics of community organizing to set up local community development corporations, credit unions, land banks, and other instruments to help low income people gain access to credit and become homeowners. The Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles established a credit union (efcula.org). Chicago’s St. Edmund’s Episcopal Church’s investments in housing have helped transform a neighborhood (www.stedmundschicago.org). Christ Church Cathedral in Cincinnati has developed a 25-unit Scholar House to help deal with the city’s affordable housing crisis (www.cincinnatiathedral.org). In the Bronx, a group of churches united to make major investment in schools and housing (www.sbc-iaf.org). In Baltimore, an ecumenical coalition supports Baltimoreans United for Leadership Development (BUILD) which advocates for public and private community investment and operates as a community development corporation. (www.builtiaf.org)

Conventional approaches often receive government funding. The Federal Government has helped with community investment by letting the Treasury Department certify CDFIs and by investing in them. It has provided billions in funding through the Department of Housing and Urban Development, community development block grants, historic preservation tax credits and other grant funds. State and local governments pass on federal funds to local projects and some allocate local funds to community development projects.

Church Teaching

The Episcopal Church’s teaching on economic justice has roots in the Old Testament prophetic teaching regarding the treatment of widows and orphans, hospitality to strangers, and liberation of the oppressed. Traditions such as Jubilee year symbolize the central concern for justice. Jesus’ teaching and the communal sharing of his followers continue the pattern of concern. The 1988 General Convention adopted the “Michigan Plan”, a program calling for community investment in the form of institutions such as credit unions and community development corporations in low-income communities.

Questions for Candidates

1. What strategies would you support to draw investment into communities which have lost their major employers?

2. How would you see public or private initiatives bringing investment into small business, low cost housing, and non-profit facilities in low-income communities in our [city/county/state]?
3. What strategies would you support to create better financing for local community development corporations, better schools and public improvements?
4. Do you think government at all levels should be concerned about the fair distribution of public investment?

Resources

Lloyd, Susan, *Community Investing Resources* www.enei.org/resources

Myers, Ched and Andy Loving, *From Mammon to Manna: Sabbath Economics and Community Investing* www.bcm-net.org

Myers, Ched, *The Biblical Vision of Sabbath Economics*, 2001

Jubilee Kairos Document (www.economicsofcompassion.org).

Master Plan for Economics of Compassion (www.economicsofcompassion.org)

Episcopal Church Advocacy Resources

Office of Government Relations

For more resources on public policy of the Episcopal Church and organizing your congregation and community for action:

Advocacy Resources – Episcopal Church Policies <https://episcopalchurch.org/ogr/general-advocacy-resources>

Civic Engagement – This updated page includes the new Census engagement toolkit and a video from the Presiding Bishop about the census. It also includes OGRs revised 2020 Vote Faithfully election engagement toolkit and the existing civil discourse curriculum. <https://episcopalchurch.org/OGR/civic-engagement>

Vote Faithfully – Election Engagement Toolkit
https://episcopalchurch.org/files/ogr_vote_faithfully_2020_election_toolkit.pdf

Episcopal Public Policy Network – How to get policy action alerts
<https://episcopalchurch.org/OGR/eppn-sign-up>

Office of Government Relations (OGR) has a series on Criminal Justice Reform here:
<https://episcopalchurch.org/posts/ogr/eppn-criminal-justice-series-introduction-13th-amendment>

General Convention Resolutions and their updates can be found in the Archives of General Convention and the Executive Council resolution search engine.

Questions for Candidates

(a compilation of questions from each of the sections)

Climate Change

1. Will you champion a carbon fee and refund program?
 - a. Many economists think this is the most effective means of reducing the use of fossil fuels.
 - b. It is revenue neutral: All collected fees (minus operating expenses) would be returned to taxpayers.
2. Will you champion continued tax incentives and rebates for rooftop solar, community solar, and electric vehicles?
 - a. These are not quite yet cost competitive with other vehicles and sources of electricity, but they will be soon, if they are helped to grow to scale.
 - b. Follow up: Will you require utilities to provide net metering to customers who install solar panels, and prohibit them from charging exorbitant network access fees?
3. Will you work to close the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and all national (or state) owned lands to oil exploration?
4. Will you champion legislation to require manufacturers to provide for the recapture of substantially all refrigeration gases at the end of equipment service?
 - a. Surprisingly, one of the largest single sources of greenhouse gas emissions, is the gases used in refrigeration.
5. More generally, are you prepared to make combating climate change a top priority in your legislative (or executive) work?
6. What other steps would you pursue to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

Climate Change and Agriculture

Of candidates for President of the United States, Senator and Representative

1. How do you see agriculture and the food system playing a part in any “green new deal?”
2. Which programs would you support to assist American farmers and ranchers in adopting climate smart practices, developing on-farm renewable energy projects, and responding to rapid climate change?
3. In the face of climate change, how might USAID do a better job of supporting local agroecology and the key role of women around the globe in small-scale agriculture?

Of candidates for statewide and local offices

1. Recognizing that the wording of questions will need to be adapted to each state’s political culture and each locale’s role in agriculture, question 2) above is a good place to start.
2. In urban and suburban areas: What policies do you feel need to be enacted to encourage urban and greenbelt agriculture, in order to increase food security and reduce climate impacts of our food supply?

Environmental Justice, Climate Change, and Migration

1. What initiatives do you support to address the needs of migrants displaced from their homes due to climate factors?
2. How might our community/state/country provide resources to assist individuals within our community/state/country impacted by climate change?
3. Describe the policies you would introduce to handle increased instances of climate-based migration in the future?
4. What policies focused on mitigation efforts and/or adaptation strategies do you espouse in order to deal with the underlying causes of climate-based migration?

The Issues of the Wage Gap & Income Inequality

1. Given that the wealthiest one percent of American households own 40 percent of the country's wealth, which is higher than it has been at any point since at least 1962, and that from 2013, the share of wealth owned by the 1 percent shot up by nearly three percentage points and that the wealth owned by the bottom 90 percent fell over the same period, which means that today, the top 1 percent of households own more wealth than the bottom 90 percent combined. What are your plans to address income equality and the wealth gap in this country?

The Shortcomings in the First Step Act

1. The FIRST STEP Act was a critical win in the fight to reduce mass incarceration because it's the largest step the federal government has taken to reduce the number of people in federal custody. However, the federal government remains the nation's leading incarcerator, with more people under the custody of the Federal Bureau of Prisons than any single state. The problem is that it leaves significant mandatory minimum sentences in place. In addition, two of the bill's key sentencing provisions are not retroactive, which minimizes their overall impact. Given those facts, what would you do to address these shortcomings in The First Step Act?

The Issue of Voter Suppression

1. Since Section 4 of The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was struck down in the 2013 Supreme Court Shelby Case various statewide Voter ID Legislation has been adopted, which some argue amounts to voter suppression among African Americans. Given this fact, what are your plans to address the issue of voter suppression?

Immigration: The Special Role of the Church in the Interdisciplinary Work for Compassionate and Humane Immigration Policy

1. What can local communities do to promote just and compassionate treatment of immigrants?
2. What can our state government do to promote just and compassion treatment of immigrants?
3. What can our federal government do to promote just and compassionate treatment of immigrants?

Equitable access to quality health care based on need

1. Is health insurance a basic human right? If not, why not?
2. Do you support the Affordable Care Act? If not, what do you see as a viable replacement?
3. Do you believe in Medicare for all? How do feel it should be funded? Do you feel it has any limitations? IF so, what and how can they be fixed?

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