

A Statement on Economic Justice
Alliance of Baptists -- Convocation, April 30, 2011

Alliance support of economic justice is consistent with the Alliance Covenant and Mission, which states:

In a time when historic Baptist principles, freedoms, and traditions need a clear voice, and in our personal and corporate response to the call of God in Jesus Christ to be disciples and servants in the world, we commit ourselves to ... the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ and the calling of God to all peoples to repentance and faith, reconciliation and hope, social and economic justice ...

To keep faith with our Covenant ... we side with those who are poor (and) pursue justice with and for those who are oppressed.

“As people of faith, we believe that society and government have a divinely-mandated responsibility to care for and lift up people struggling to overcome poverty, protect the vulnerable, and promote health and security for all, we call on Congress and the Administration to address U.S. fiscal problems wisely and responsibly by protecting the services and programs that enable all women and families to live safely, security, and with dignity.” —Ecumenical Advocacy Days, Statement on Economic Justice, 2011.

The richest 10 percent of Americans were the only ones who benefited from the economic growth between 2000 and 2007. During this same period of economic growth, poverty rose by 18 percent¹. These statistics are but one small example of how our public policy in the last 30 years has benefited the richest Americans rather than providing protection and assistance to the poorest Americans. The recession that officially started in 2007, including the financial and housing crises, was not caused by poor people.

Our society remains wealthy, but the wealth is not shared equitably and fairly. Therefore, we must work for a paradigm shift in our society. We will demand that our government, local, state and federal, address the needs of all citizens and adopt public policy that supports all citizens not just the wealthy or powerful international corporations.

In previous statements, we have called on Congress to raise the minimum wage and to join with us in ending poverty wages. We also have joined other faith leaders and communities in recognizing the right of workers to organize for collective bargaining with employers regarding wages, benefits and working conditions. We re-affirm those commitments today as specific steps that can help low-wage workers lift themselves out of poverty. Today we broaden our call for these changes to state and local governments as well as to our federal government.

In addition, based on our covenant and mission statement, we endorse the Ecumenical Advocacy Days 2011 statement on economic justice and particularly on the call to protect programs in our federal budget that support women and families.

Therefore, we join with our ecumenical partners in urging our local and state governments, the United States Congress and the Administration to:

1. Raise the minimum wage to a living wage.
2. Recognize the right of workers to organize for collective bargaining with employers regarding wages, benefits and working conditions.
3. Address fiscal problems in a way that safeguards assistance for impoverished and hungry families.
4. Protect and adequately fund programs that serve women and families—especially those struggling to overcome poverty—domestically and around the world.
5. Exempt domestic anti-poverty programs and poverty-focused humanitarian and development aid from cuts and multi-year spending caps. A strong precedent exists for protecting the poor in the context of deficit reduction by exempting such programs from cuts.

We pledge to raise our voices in advocacy for people living in poverty, for workers organizing for better wages, benefits and working conditions and for public and fiscal policies that support and protect anti-poverty programs².

¹ <http://www.pewresearch.org/poverty>

² <http://www.aabaptists.org>

