

Public Services: Stand Up, Stand For, and Resist Cuts

1 **WHEREAS**, there is no calling for Christians higher than that which leads to the cross of Christ; and

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3 **WHEREAS**, the cross connects us to the sacrifice of Christ as the power to sacrifice all for the sake of
4 Christ; and

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6 **WHEREAS**, the needs of the neighbor as identified by Jesus in the parable of the Good Samaritan are the
7 object of the Christian’s sacrifice; and

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9 **WHEREAS**, as citizens of this state and nation we share responsibility with the whole community for the
10 welfare of all other citizen-neighbors and a responsibility, as Christian citizens, to focus particular attention
11 on the needs of the poor; and

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13 **WHEREAS**, budget proposals pending before both the state and federal legislatures demand huge sacrifices
14 from the poor without demanding greater sacrifice from the rest of us; and

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16 **WHEREAS**, the six Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) bishops in Minnesota have joined
17 other religious leaders in signing a declaration of principles for work on overcoming poverty entitled “A
18 Common Foundation” (on back); and

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20 **WHEREAS**, Lutheran Social Service (LSS) of Minnesota, in pursuit of its mission to “express the love of
21 Christ for all people through acts of service,” seeks as a top priority to address the needs of poor and working
22 poor neighbors with services proven to lead toward self-sufficiency; and

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24 **WHEREAS**, LSS staff across the state are witness to a precipitous and accelerating decline in public support
25 for meeting those needs, resulting in serious hardship among our most vulnerable neighbors; and

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27 **WHEREAS**, contributed support for LSS services from individuals and congregations is vital but cannot
28 replace the basic funding required from tax dollars to meet needs; therefore be it

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30 **RESOLVED**, that the Minneapolis Area Synod (MAS) Partnership Table develop and distribute materials
31 (e.g., an adult forum speakers bureau list, talking points and outline, and sermon notes) to assist
32 congregational efforts to engage issues of public policy affecting the most vulnerable in our society, and
33 establish communication methods to encourage the synod’s pastors and lay leaders to discuss and act on
34 issues of public policy impacting the poor as a matter of moral urgency, utilizing the principles listed in A
35 Common Foundation (see reverse) as the basis for reflection; and be it further

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37 **RESOLVED**, that the Office of the Bishop encourage congregations of the MAS, as full, legitimate, and
38 essential participants in civil society, to stand up for those in need by speaking publicly to elected leaders at
39 the state and federal level in support of the moral imperative to care for the poor; and be it further

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41 **RESOLVED**, that the MAS, through its bishop and in concert with the other five Evangelical Lutheran
42 Church in America synods in Minnesota and their bishops, take a public stand during the current debate
43 about taxes and spending priorities in support of a public policy position with respect to the poor that calls
44 upon those with greater resources to make greater sacrifices through additional taxes in order that the poor
45 not be asked to sacrifice further even as matters of national security, homeland defense and growing deficits
46 demand attention; and be it finally

47 **RESOLVED**, that during this period of public debate about how we will respond as civil society to the needs
48 of our poor and working poor neighbors, that congregations and individual members of those congregations
49 be encouraged to consider generous additional contributions to services in areas hardest hit by recent and
50 looming budget cuts (i.e. community-based and preventive services for vulnerable youth, working poor
51 families and individuals, and fragile seniors).

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The Reference and Counsel Committee recommends adoption of this resolution.

▶ **SA04.16.05.0** Voted to adopt Resolution RC2005-10. Carried by voice vote.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: A Common Foundation Shared Principles for Work on Overcoming Poverty

As a people of faith, with varying theologies and traditions, we are convinced of a remarkable convergence on fundamental principles that call us to common work in combating poverty and walking with people living in poverty:

- ◆ We believe it is the Creator's intent that all people are provided those things that protect human dignity and make for healthy life: adequate food and shelter, meaningful work, safe communities, healthcare, and education.
- ◆ We believe we are intended to live well together as a whole community, seeking the common good, avoiding wide disparities between those who have too little to live on and those who have a disproportionate share of the world's goods.
- ◆ We believe we are all called to work to overcome poverty, and that this work transcends both any particular political theory or party and any particular economic theory or structure. We believe that overcoming poverty requires the use of private and public resources.
- ◆ We believe we are called to make alliances within the faith community and with others in society who share the commitment to overcome poverty.
- ◆ We believe that overcoming poverty involves both acts of direct service to alleviate the outcomes of poverty and advocacy to change those structures that result in people living in poverty.
- ◆ We believe government is neither solely responsible for alleviating poverty, nor removed from this responsibility. We believe government is the vehicle by which people order their lives based on their shared vision. We believe society is well served when people of faith bring their values into the public arena. It is this remarkable convergence around issues of poverty and the common good that leads people of varying faith traditions to unite in calling on government to make a critical commitment to overcoming poverty.
- ◆ We believe the desire to overcome poverty is not simply a human idea, but is the desire of our Creator, and that the work to create a more just and whole society will be empowered by the Creator's presence.

We invite each faith tradition to make explicit their expression of faith and how it understands this common foundation. On these shared principles, we together commit ourselves to work to ensure that no person is forced to live in poverty.

Written by Bishop Peter Rogness, signed by 31 Minnesota Leaders of Faith Communities