

Statement of Legislative Principles

For the 2017-2018 Legislative Session



California Council of Churches **IMPACT**

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This statement represents the present thinking of the Board of Directors of California Church IMPACT, (hereafter referred to as we) which includes 52 Protestant and Orthodox judicatories, denominations and affinity groups in California. This statement reflects the consensus of the California Church IMPACT Board and does not claim to represent the viewpoints of all church members in California or our member denominations and judicatories.

Prelude to Theological Foundation

As people of faith the scriptures have an important place within our moral discernment, but they do not speak with the same unquestioned authority with which they spoke in the time immediately following the Great Reformation. Progressive Christians seek to take scripture seriously, without taking it literally.

Therefore, it is appropriate that today we ask: “How do we read the scriptures?” This is the fundamental question which must be answered by a “Council of Churches.” To say that one is a Christian simply will not suffice in today’s world. There is a vast gulf within the tradition on how to read our “sacred texts.” They cover a continuum, ranging from a fundamental (literal) reading on one end to what Marcus Borg calls an “*historical metaphorical*” reading on the other. These different ways of reading scripture lead to vastly different theological approaches to faith and life. Yet for all Christians the scriptures remain an important source in trying to determine right and wrong. Thus they should be a crucial voice in determining the merits of proposed legislation. All reading of scripture is an interpretation. Therefore, it is important that one is clear about the question, “How do we read the scriptures?”

Simply pulling passages out of context to support this or that legislation, a practice called “*proof texting*” is no longer an adequate or an appropriate methodology. This practice has led to a situation where no matter what the issue, proponents on both sides can and do appeal to the scriptures for support. This leads to opponents quoting competing passages, pulled out of context, with little regard for interpreting the text as a whole — either within its original ancient context or

within its modern interpretive process. How we determine the merits of proposed legislation is dependent upon how we read the scriptures as a whole, our hermeneutical approach, and not upon how many passages we can marshal for our defense. The issue is about interpreting the entire text of the scriptures in a consistent manner, rather than finding a lone passage to shore up a particular position.

So, how do we (the California Council of Churches IMPACT board) read the scriptures? We acknowledge that differing hermeneutical approaches will lead to different conclusions. Therefore, we offer this paper, and the five books which are its' basis, to clearly lay out our theological principles for how we "read the scriptures" in determining our support for legislative actions.

Part One: An Introduction

Marcus Borg in *Speaking Christian* summarizes the two competing methods of reading and interpreting the scriptures in this way:

*"These two visions of Christianity — one emphasizing the next world and what we must believe and do in order to get there, the other emphasizing God's passion for the transformation of this world — are very different. Yet they use the same language and share the same sacred scripture, the same bible. What separates them is how the shared language is understood — whether within the framework of heaven-and-hell Christianity or within the framework of God's passion for transformation in this world."*¹

Walter Brueggemann in *Journey to the Common Good* argues that from the very beginning there was within the scriptures both a call to be a covenant community and a continuing subversion of that call. Ched Myers in *Sabbath Economics* shows how that covenant community (the way of God) was to be an alternative community to the way of the world (the way of the Pharaoh).

John Dominic Crossan in *God and Empire* deals with the implications of reading Jesus through the framework of God's passion for the transformation of this world by contrasting two ways to peace, Caesar's way and Jesus' way. Finally, Walter Wink in *The Powers That Be* suggests ways in which we continue the contemporary struggle for justice through naming and engaging the existing powers.

These five authors articulate a theological rationale that is consistent with a prophetic reading and interpretation of scripture. This serves as a sound foundation for the Legislative Principles of the California Council of Churches IMPACT board.

Part Two: Call and Resistance

From the time of the covenant at Sinai Israel establishes a tribal confederacy, resisting for almost three hundred years the imperial monarchical systems of its neighbors and of Pharaoh's Egypt. Resisting both their present and their past; resisting both the lure of domination and the temptation to return to the non-responsibility of slavery.

But, as Walter Brueggemann points out there is a growing resistance to the idea of being a covenant community, as an alternative to the domination system of the world. It is "... a powerful counternarrative in the biblical tradition that resists the claims of exodus-Sinai-Deuteronomy."(2)

This counternarrative comes through the development of *holiness* which establishes a hierarchy of status within the community making some members more worthy of God's gifts than others. In this hierarchy lie the seeds of privilege and power. Eventually the tribal confederacy grows weary of being an alternative to the way of the world and gives in to the desire to be like the rest of the world, desiring a king to rule over them. The concept of *holiness* and the hierarchy it establishes will be exploited by the monarchy as it returns to the way of the empire.

Solomon becomes the epitome of the way of kings. He excels in gaining wealth and power and wisdom. His exploits and accomplishments are championed by the biblical chroniclers, and reflected in the teaching of the church as a model of pious faithfulness. While Solomon may have been a patron of the arts, gathering wisdom from around the world, we might better understand his wisdom gathering as "intelligence gathering."

Solomon becomes the biblical model for a global perspective on the common good; this is, however, a perspective that smacks of *privilege, entitlement, and exploitation*, all in the name of God. This perspective, reminiscent of Pharaoh, takes on a powerful life in Jerusalem under Solomon. This largely nullifies the covenant vision of Sinai. Solomon's increased wealth and power and knowledge is at the expense of the people who now labor to satisfy the demands of the monarchy and its appetite for world dominance. Once again the people are in servitude to the elite few. In the end, the domination system is alive and well. It's as though exodus never happened.

Against this backdrop of domination, the prophets voice their opposition citing God's call to be a covenant people. Against the triad of Solomon's "wealth, power, and wisdom" the prophets invoke God's passion for steadfast love (*hesed*), justice (*mishpat*), and righteousness (*tsedaqah*).

Yahweh's steadfast love calls for distributive justice. In covenantal tradition the particular subject of Yahweh's justice is the triad "widow, orphan, immigrant," those without leverage or muscle to sustain their own legitimate place in society. It is righteousness that differentiates between charity and justice. Charity masks the real need for justice. Charity aids the individual but does little to correct systemic imbalances. It is this righteousness that demands that we challenge systemic injustice.

Part Three: The Biblical Vision of Sabbath Economics

The foundational story of the Hebrew people is the story of The Exodus, the journey from slavery under Pharaoh in Egypt to covenant community under Yahweh at Sinai. The issue for this community, following liberation from Egypt, is "how shall we live?"

Shall we continue to live under the ways of Egypt or shall we follow an alternative way? Shall we continue to follow the way of the world or shall we follow the way of God? Shall we continue to live in a way characterized by the accumulation of wealth and power by the few or shall we follow a way where all have enough? Shall we continue to live in a world of discrepancy between rich and poor or shall we live in a world in which all share from God's abundance. Shall we continue to live in a lifestyle that leads to slavery for all or shall we follow a lifestyle that leads to community for everyone?

Ched Myers calls God's alternative way Sabbath Economics. Sabbath is all about re-centering human life on being rather than on doing. It is grounded in the gift of God's abundant creation,

which is sufficient and sustainable. Economics means literally, the management of the household. So Sabbath Economics is a way of life that leads to the full participation of all in an economy of sustainability and sufficiency. Practicing Sabbath Economics is the personal and political struggle to embody the culture of gift (creation and manna) in the midst of a culture of accumulation (wealth and power).

At its root, Sabbath Economics is about gifts and about grace. It is about the grace of receiving that which the creator gives freely to all, and the responsibility to not take too much or to mistake the gift for a possession. Sabbath Economics is built upon three axioms:

- 1) The world as created by God is abundant with enough for everyone provided that both individuals and communities restrain their appetite and live within appropriate limits;
- 2) The disparities in wealth are not part of the natural order. They are a result of human greed, which must be mitigated through distributive justice; and
- 3) The prophets call us to such strategies of redistribution.

The way of Sabbath Economics unfolds in the manna story where God rains down bread from heaven, a metaphor for the earth's fertility and ability to provide for all of our needs. The people are instructed how to gather this "bread." They are to gather as much as they need, no more and no less. They are to keep the gift circulating — it is intended for daily use and not for hoarding or accumulation. They are to keep the Sabbath tradition, which in part limits human activity.

Within Torah, the Sabbath Day of rest expands into the principle of "the remainder," which establishes the right of the poor to participate in the gifts of God. At every harvest, the borders of the fields are left unpicked so that the poor and sojourners may share in God's gifts of abundance.

The concept of seventh day becomes the idea of seventh year, when debts are to be forgiven. And the cycle of seven years leads to Jubilee with its practice not only of debt forgiveness, but also of the return of foreclosed lands, and release from slavery.

This is followed by the Year of the Lord's Favor, a celebration of a renewed creation and a radical societal transformation. These practices of just distribution and redistribution ensure that there will be no permanent disparity in wealth and power within the covenant community.

Within the prophetic community, the prophets continue to uplift Sabbath Economics and pronounce judgment on rulers who favor the Economy of Empire. This prophetic call supports the purpose of Sabbath Economics to sustain the common good, by placing limits on the economic activity of the wealthy while working to ensure the full participation of the poor in the gifts of God.

Part Four: God and Empire

We believe that Jesus was a devotee of Sabbath Economics. His message and life centered on the ruling style of God. His call to discipleship was an invitation to participate with God and to return to the covenant practices of hesed, mishpat, and tzedakah. To be a disciple is to work for the common good.

The kingdom (ruling style) of God can best be understood in contrast to the kingdoms of this world, with the epitome of worldly kingdoms being the Roman Empire and the way of Caesar.

Caesar, having brought the Pax Romana into existence in 32 BCE, was proclaimed Divine, Lord, Son of God, God, God from God, Redeemer, Liberator, and Savior of the World. Having defeated Marc Antony and Cleopatra at the Battle of Actium, he transformed the Roman Republic into the Roman Empire based upon four kinds of power: military; economic; political; and ideological. The ideological/theological basis of Caesar's empire can best be summed up in the quatrain: Religion - War - Victory – Peace. In a shorthand notation this would be dubbed “Peace through Victory.”

Subsequently, in the Christian Scriptures, the titles given to Caesar are all applied to Jesus of Nazareth. It was the early church's way of saying “Jesus is Lord!” Obviously, if Jesus is Lord, Caesar is not. Jesus' ministry, which resulted in his being hailed as Lord, was founded on the quatrain: Religion – Non-violence – Justice – Peace. In a shorthand notation this would be dubbed “Peace through Justice.”

In his life and ministry Jesus rejected both the role of the expected Davidic Messiah and of the Temple State of Judah. Instead, he followed in the tradition of the covenant community and the role of the prophets. In his rejection of the role of Davidic Messiah Jesus rejected the political violence and the power of coercion. In his rejection of the temple state he rejected the economic violence resulting from the Holiness and the Debt code.

In his life actions and teachings we see in Jesus a passion for the transformation of this world through the means of neighborliness and compassion. Jesus ministry consisted of proclaiming the Kingdom of God, a political and religious metaphor which envisions what this world would be like if God were king and the domination systems were not.

The only question, of course, was whether peace on earth was to be established as Augustus' peace through victory, or Jesus' peace through justice.³

Part Five: The Powers That Be

Walter Wink invites us to consider that organizations, corporations, and nations all have spiritual dimensions. These are the powers and principalities of our world. His primary premises are the powers are good, the powers are fallen, and the powers must be redeemed. The question is how do we redeem the powers?

The most ancient and insidious myth of our time, is what Wink calls the myth of redemptive violence. He says: “*It enshrines the belief that violence saves, that war brings peace, and that might makes right. It is one of the oldest continuously repeated stories in the world.*”⁴

This takes us back to the choice between Caesar's peace through victory and Jesus' peace through justice.

Jesus taught his followers to respond to evil in a non-violent way. Within this context non-violence does not mean passivity. Quite the contrary is true. It is not a quietest, passive acceptance of all that the powers and principalities seek to do. It is instead an active resistance to the status quo, but a resistance that is grounded in the way of God

Jesus' teachings call for an aggressive response to the fallen powers of this world through a practice that included a rejection of domination, the embracing of equality and the common good, and the inclusion of those whom the powers have marginalized.

Just as Brueggemann maintains that there is no way into the promised new way except through an exodus from the old way, so Wink maintains that there is no way into the kingdom except through dying to the old ways. Wink says that the ego must be totally reoriented with God at the center.

“...In the suffering of the poor God was screaming ... at all of us and at our institutions and social systems that cause and perpetuate hunger, poverty, and inequality. We end then with the divine cry ringing in our ears, exhorting us to engage these mighty powers....”⁵

Conclusion:

And so we have come full circle. We choose to read scripture in the following ways:

1. We choose to read scripture in terms of the transformation of this world and not in terms of heaven and hell;
2. We choose to read it in terms of the common good espoused by the prophetic movement, as alternative and response to the domination system;
3. We choose to read it as a disparate collection of works by individual authors, all of which do not have equal theological value;
4. We choose to read it in terms of Sabbath Economics grounded in covenant relationship, centering ourselves in God’s way;
5. We choose to read it in terms of the kingdom Jesus proclaimed even though we exist within the kingdom of this world, choosing to work for peace through justice and not peace through victory; and
6. Last but not least, we choose to read scripture as a call to action, an invitation to be in relationship with God and to enter into the story, engaging the principalities and powers of the modern domination system wherever we might find them.

Therefore we establish these legislative principles:

I. LIBERTIES

A. Religious Liberty

We affirm our support of the special protection afforded to freedom of worship, freedom of conscience, freedom of thought and freedom of religion, realizing that these freedoms are the core of our American heritage and rights.

Therefore, we support policies that:

1. maintain the proper separation of church and state.
2. recognize that congregations, and all agencies of the denominations are free from any government secret investigations, surveillance, intimidation or any other acts that attempt to interfere with God’s call to justice and peace.
3. recognize the privilege of clergy to refuse to disclose penitential communications.
4. guarantee institutional residents the right to have religious services provided by chaplains who have met standards of preparation and who are recognized by their denomination.

5. guarantee a trained, permanent and continuous civil service chaplaincy for residents of publicly funded institutions.

We oppose policies that:

1. use government resources to undo the Constitutional protection of the free exercise of religion or to interfere with the free exercise of religion.
2. would impose on all Americans the religious viewpoint of any one denomination or religious group.

B. Civil Liberties

Freedom of thought, freedom of association, and the right to privacy are basic to human dignity. Full access to information, to diverse points of view, to religious, literary and artistic communication, is essential in a free society.

Therefore, we support policies that:

1. provide the civil rights and equality of all persons in employment, state licensing, public housing, and public services.
2. protect the integrity of the family unit by providing necessary economic supports so that parents are able to care for the basic well being of their children.
3. promote citizen-supervised procedures for the public review of complaints against law enforcement agencies.
4. protect the right of dissent and public protest.

We oppose policies that:

1. allow wiretapping and electronic eavesdropping and G.P.S., cell phone tracking except under court order in limited circumstances.
2. allow the maintenance by government agencies of secret files on lawful organizations and individuals.

II. CHILDREN

We believe that society bears a certain responsibility to ensure that every child has access to the benefits of human provisions of intimate nurture, safety, health care, learning, guidance, and reasonable economic support.

Therefore, we support policies that:

1. protect children from social, sexual, developmental or economic exploitation.
2. provide services necessary to ensure placement of a child, including foster children, in a stable, functional home.
3. provide adequate, convenient quality child care programs with uniform standards for low-income families that meets the needs of their communities.
4. ensure child support payments by a legally responsible non-custodial parent.
5. provide programs of diagnosis and treatment for problems of child abuse and neglect.
6. provide temporary shelters, group homes, foster homes, and other residential treatment programs for children and youth in need of services.

7. provide trained advocates for children within the juvenile justice system with the child's interest in mind.

III. CIVIL RIGHTS

We believe that discrimination due to age, race, nationality, gender or sexual orientation in employment, education, housing, banking and the criminal justice system are fundamental civil rights issues and of deep concern to people of faith.

A. Gender Issues

Both men and women are created to grow into mature persons who develop their own particular abilities, choose their own life plans, and accept others in a spirit of cooperation, becoming both independent and interdependent. We believe that public policies should encourage women to develop and exercise their full potential as persons created in the image of God.

Therefore, we support policies that:

1. include women in decision-making roles and change behavior which treats women as subordinate persons.
2. facilitate equal rights for women, specifically in these areas:
 - a. Equal pay for work of comparable value;
 - b. Protection against sexual harassment at home, in the work place, and through media and advertising;
 - c. Affirmative action programs for women;
 - d. Family leave for both parents;
 - e. Supportive handling of victims and full prosecution in rape assault cases;
 - f. Provision of shelters for battered women and their children;
 - g. Job training and placement for displaced homemakers;
 - h. Credit and loan opportunities;
 - i. Conversion rights for previously-covered dependents of group health insurance plans.

B. Gay, Lesbian, Bi-Sexual and Transgender Persons

Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual, and Transgender persons are created in the image of God and are to be treated with dignity and as valued members of society.

Therefore, we support policies that:

1. affirm civil rights and equal protection under the law in housing, health care, and employment.
2. establish state recognition of domestic partnership, with full legal rights and responsibilities, as the means for promoting stable, monogamous, life long relationships among couples of the same gender.
3. advocate for full state and federal marriage rights for same-gender couples, including immigration rights, tax rights, and all other rights and privileges guaranteed to legally married persons by the state and federal governments.
4. facilitate equal rights for LGBT people, specifically in these areas:

- a. Equal pay for work of comparable value;
- b. Protection against sexual harassment at home, in the work place, in schools, and through media and advertising;
- c. Affirmative action programs;
- d. Family leave for all parents;
- e. supportive handling of victims and full prosecution in rape and assault cases
- f. Provision of shelters for battered GLBT persons and their children
- g. Job training and placement for displaced homemakers
- h. Credit and loan opportunities
- i. Conversion rights for previously-covered dependents of group health insurance plans as needed.

C. Aging

We believe that society has a responsibility to make adequate provision for aging people.

Therefore, we support policies that:

- 1. ensure older persons are not deprived of affordable housing.
- 2. provide adequate and appropriate health care.
- 3. support the right of older persons to employment without discrimination on the basis of age.

D. Race and Ethnicity

All human beings, regardless of ethnicity, are created in God's image and represent the full expression of God's creative diversity.

Therefore, we support policies that:

- 1. respect treaties and support the rights and opportunities of American Indians, particularly in relation to their land, water, treaties, culture and religious heritage.
- 2. ensure the rights and opportunities of African, Asian, and Hispanic Americans and all other racial and ethnic groups to full participation in California life.
- 3. promote affirmative action programs for persons of color.
- 4. support equal pay for equal work.
- 5. provide equal protection under the law and equal access to adequate legal counsel.

E. Disabled Persons

As God's creations, we are fashioned uniquely; each endowed with individuality of body, mind and spirit. Each has abilities; each seeks fulfillment and wholeness. Each of us has disabilities; each knows isolation and incompleteness.

Therefore, we support policies that:

- 1. provide adequately for the basic needs of persons with mental, developmental, physical and/or emotional handicapping conditions.
- 2. bring down barriers that inhibit persons with disabling conditions to fully participate in California's social, economic, spiritual, and cultural life.
- 3. provide sufficient Special Education funding in every school district to assure equal education opportunities to students with disabilities regardless of level of disability.

IV. IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

We believe that God’s love embraces every member of the human race, and therefore we are called to extend help to those in need without regard to nationality, ethnic origin, religion, culture or legal status. “Welcome one another as I have welcomed you.” (Rom 15:7) “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” (Mt. 25:35) Biblical stories relate that encounters with strangers may have divine significance. Because we believe that all people are made in God’s image and exist under the reign of God, nations and their borders do not claim our ultimate allegiance. We support policies that promote the value and dignity of immigrants and refugees, recognizing the many and important contributions they make to our diverse state.

Therefore, we support policies that ensure:

1. adequate housing, nutrition, health care, safe working conditions and schooling for children on the move.
2. access for permanent residents to the same benefits citizens receive
3. full protection of human rights for all.

V. PUBLIC EDUCATION

We affirm the importance of quality public education for persons in California requiring all levels of government to comply with constitutional guarantees of equal educational opportunity for all children, youth and adults. We support the right of free quality public education for every child in California.

Therefore, we support policies that:

1. provide for preschool child development programs with trained, certified teachers to ensure that children will be ready for elementary education.
2. provide funding for reduced class room size in all elementary grades.
3. provide funding for free before- and after-school programs for students attending schools which qualify for free and reduced school lunch programs.
4. ensure that special resources exist so that children may successfully move from grade to grade.
5. require teachers to be trained and qualified to teach and be required to demonstrate competence in the subjects they are assigned to teach.
6. mandate all classrooms be equipped with current textbooks, technology, instructional materials and supplies.
7. ensure that school building are renovated and brought up to basic state and local building codes.
8. provide sufficient funding so that each school district may offer equal education to its students regardless of the level of wealth in the district.
9. allocate funding for professional and competent counselors for students.
10. allocate funding for social and health services.
11. promote equal access to higher education for all by affirmative outreach and support for students from low income status.
12. Provide and allocate funding for parents to be trained on school policies and practices that impact school life for their children in K-12 grades.

VI. ECONOMIC JUSTICE

A. Employment

We believe that all people are created in the image of God and have the right to economic resources necessary to enable them to live with dignity.

Therefore, we support polities that:

1. ensure decent, safe jobs with livable wages sufficient to support a household's basic needs.
2. ensure adequate protections for vulnerable workers such as seasonal farm workers.
3. ensure equal employment opportunities for all people without regard to race, age, creed, national origin or ancestry, gender, martial status, disability, or sexual orientation.
4. advocate the right of workers to bargain collectively.
5. Encourage job growth in employment opportunities that reflect 21st-century skills in science, mathematics, technology, medical science, and engineering.

B. Food and Nutrition

We believe that adequate food and basic nutrition are essential for human existence. It is the responsibility of society to provide these necessities for low-income persons.

Therefore, we support policies that:

1. improve nutrition, especially for children, the elderly and those who are disabled.
2. provide for distribution of food among the most marginalized.
3. Provide clean, safe, fresh fruits and vegetables to children and elders year around.

C. Housing

We believe that everyone has a right to decent shelter.

Therefore, we support policies that:

1. increase very low, low and moderate income housing development and preservation.
2. enable renters to become homeowners.
3. provide funding for transitional housing programs for homeless families and individuals and adequately fund shelters as a temporary measure for California's homeless population.
4. provide adequate, affordable supportive housing for people with mental and physical disabilities, and the elderly.

D. Public Assistance

We believe that adequate support services which enable people to move from public assistance to employment must be created and maintained. When jobs are not available or people are unable to work, society has a responsibility to provide adequate income for a minimal living standard.

Therefore, we support policies that:

1. provide child care and health care for adults and children through access to affordable and accessible health care programs unless and until such programs are provided through employment.

2. provide adequate job training and employment supports to assist individuals moving from assistance to livable wage jobs.
3. provide transportation for people in job training programs.
4. Assure that cash allowances for welfare-to-work employment requirements is at least equal to California's per hour minimum wage for 40 hours of work per week.

VII. ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it...(Ps. 24:1a) Earth-keeping today means insisting on sustainability--the ongoing capacity of natural and social systems to thrive together. This requires human beings to practice wise, humble, responsible stewardship, after the model of servanthood that we have in Jesus. No interpretation of justice and sustainability is complete without an emphasis on frugality as a norm for all, especially the prosperous.

Therefore, we support policies that:

1. fund research to determine population levels that can be adequately sustained.
2. protect human health and the environment from pollution, particularly in vulnerable communities.
3. promote planned urban and regional development with a priority of preserving prime agricultural land.
4. provide for balanced, diversified transportation systems.
5. promote energy conservation and research for alternative energy sources.
6. defend natural resources from degradation.
7. Promote environmental justice education to all segments of our society beginning at an early stage in school education programs.

We support the principle that California may establish environmental regulations which are more protective of human health and the environment than federal laws require.

VIII. THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

The world is becoming a holistic system of interdependent social, economic, and environmental systems. Though many social, economic and ecological problems can be resolved locally, regionally, or nationally, an increasing number are transnational in scope, and demand new expression of human solidarity that defy the political realities of sovereign independence.

Therefore, we support policies that:

1. recognize human solidarity as essential to a sustainable global economy requiring new levels of international cooperation and responsibility.
2. recognize that our global economic interdependence places a premium on coordinated thought and action that puts a primary focus on just and sustainable human development.
3. call for debt cancellation with countries where that public debt is creating poverty.

IX. RESTORATIVE & CRIMINAL JUSTICE

We affirm the concept of restorative justice, which seeks to repair injuries to victims, communities, and offenders, resulting from crime. Restorative justice requires these parties to work with government, and be actively engaged in the criminal justice process.

A. Incarceration

“Then they...will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you...sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’” (Matthew 25:44)

We are concerned for people who are inmates of prisons. A large percentage of these people are poor, people of color, friendless, young, uneducated, unskilled, and products of unstable families. We are concerned for people employed by federal, state, and local agencies to confine, supervise, and correct criminal offenders.

We are concerned for the general public. Most prisoners return to society. Surely it is in the best interest of our society that these persons return motivated and equipped to live useful and constructive lives.

Therefore, we support policies that:

1. offer alternatives to incarceration for non-violent offenders as a viable option to incarceration.
2. improve institutional treatment, environment, rehabilitative and correctional programs at all levels of incarceration.
3. raise the standards for employment of correctional officers and other personnel to include psychological screening and appropriate training in the area of human behavior.
4. encourage community access to institutions of detention in support of the rehabilitation process of those detained.
5. provide better services of physical, emotional and financial support of victims of violent crime.

We oppose policies that:

1. incarcerate or house juvenile offenders with adult inmates.
2. try juveniles as adults.

C. Death Penalty

We believe that capital punishment cannot be condoned by an interpretation of the Bible based upon the revelation of God’s love in Jesus Christ; that as Christians we must seek the redemption of evil doers and not their death; and that the use of the death penalty tends to brutalize the society that condones it.

Therefore, we support policies that:

1. abolish the death penalty.
2. expand the use of clemency.

We oppose policies that:

1. would expand the use of the death penalty.
2. criminalize the poor and provide disparate sentencing for persons of color

X. GAMBLING

We believe gambling is not a viable means of raising public revenues and is not a substitute for a progressive system of taxation.

Therefore, we oppose policies that:

1. expand legalized gambling in California.
2. attempt to support the public structure through gambling & taxes.

XI. HEALTH

A. Health Care

We believe that health and wholeness are central to the well being of society. In the Christian tradition, “health” is much more than mere physical well being; it is harmony and balance in life, encompassing the physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of human existence.

Therefore, we support public policies that:

1. establish a universal health care system for all citizens of California and provide quality health care for every person, a choice of providers, and is focused on the needs of patients rather than on the profits of health care institutions.
2. provide adequate substance abuse treatment for those persons who cannot afford it.
3. view gun violence as a public health epidemic and seek to curtail the production and sale of all weapons designed to harm human life.

B. Abortion

We endorse the 1973 decision of the U.S. Supreme Court on abortion recognizing the responsibility of the state to protect the life and health of the woman and of fetal life.

Therefore, we support policies that:

1. provide public funding for access to reproductive health care.
2. provide accessibility to abortion services for low-income women.

We oppose policies that:

1. seek to restrict or limit the legal option of abortion for any woman who, in consultation with her physician, chooses to exercise her right to that option.
2. require parental consent for reproductive health care.

C. End of Life Issues

We affirm the sanctity of all life that provides the right of all persons to die with dignity.

Therefore we support policies that:

1. encourage doctors and their patients to openly discuss medical issues surrounding the end of life.

2. empower patients to make appropriate decisions about living will and pain management in consultation with appropriate medical professionals.
3. empower those with untreatable, terminal illness and within six months of death, in consultation with their physicians and medical practitioners and being of sound mind, to consciously choose self-directed and administered medical means to end their suffering.

We oppose policies that:

1. Permit or encourage those not terminally ill to end their lives.

D. Stem Cell Research

Because we believe that health and healing are fundamental parts of our faith, and because the outcomes of stem cell research are as yet undetermined but hold enormous promise for the eradication of many diseases and afflictions, we recognize the importance of stem cell research to ascertain possible medical therapies and to prevent cell-related diseases,

Therefore we support public policies that:

- 1.
2. Provide funding for research that uses adult, cord blood, and donated embryonic cells including the use of somatic cell nuclear transfer (therapeutic cloning).

We oppose policies that:

1. Fund or permit the implanting of cloned eggs to produce human fetuses.

XII. GOVERNMENT AND THE PUBLIC

A. Tax Reform, the State Budget, and State Investments

The annual state budget is the collective public instrument which is vitally important in addressing many of the problems of our society. The state budget is a statement of our values and is the fiscal avenue for addressing challenges to the common good.

Therefore, we support policies that provide:

1. adequate funding for programs that will help all of California's population live as contributing citizens in a just society.
2. safeguards to prevent waste and irresponsible spending.
3. tax reforms to ensure that all citizens pay a fair and equitable tax in accordance with their ability to pay.
4. ensure that the investment of public and private funds honor human rights and peace with justice in local, national, and global markets.
5. constitutional abolition of the legislative supermajority vote for raising revenues by tax or by fee.
6. Establish governance under the U.S. Constitutional direction of democratic elections and governance.

We oppose policies that:

1. permanently encumber, through initiative or referendum, present or future general fund revenues or revenue streams for single programs.

2. permit raids on essential social services to balance the state budget.
3. allow ballot propositions to establish new programs without providing non-General Fund revenue streams to support the program, the bond debt service, or other new costs.
4. seek reforms by altering the U.S. Constitutional and democratic processes of elections, representation, and governance.

B. Campaign Finance Reform

The influence of money in political campaigns and abuses of the campaign laws has become a grave concern for California's citizens.

Therefore, we support policies that:

1. seek to improve the election process.
2. allow a combination of public and private funding to finance campaigns.
3. provide incentives for free political advertising as a community service by local TV, radio, and print media
4. designate a state income tax check-off system for a specified amount for political campaigns.