



Wisconsin Council of Churches
Public Policy Statements
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1 **Statement on Economic Justice**

2 *November 28, 2001 (Amended December 12, 2006)*

3 ***God's intention for all Creation***

4
5 From the beginning, it has been God's intention for human beings to live in fellowship with
6 God and one another and in harmony with Creation. As is told in the book of Genesis, God
7 created human beings in the image of God. God gave them everything they needed to live
8 including a garden to cultivate and tend (Genesis 2:15). With these human beings, God also
9 created community (Genesis 2:18, 22). They were given loving responsibility for all living
10 creatures and stewardship of the land. God directed humans to care for it all in a way that the
11 earth and all that live on it would thrive. In God's Creation we find abundant resources to feed,
12 house, and clothe ourselves. God continues to bless us with these resources. Our concern as the
13 Council of Churches is that without proper management, those resources are being depleted and
14 are not reaching those who need them most. Millions of people who are hungry, who do not have
15 adequate clothing and shelter, who are sick, who are dying, who are held under bondage, are
16 being deprived of God's gifts. Not everyone has even basic necessities.

17 ***The tension between the separateness of the person and the oneness of the community***

18
19 Our God knows each of us intimately (Psalm 139) and travels with us wherever we go. If we
20 choose to emphasize our God-given individuality, God is with us. When we choose to bring our
21 individuality into community as God created for us, God is there as well. There is a tension that
22 does and should exist between individuality and community. We can find full expression of self in
23 community and we, as individuals, are responsible both to and as community. Yet in a society
24 that places individuality and personal success in such high priority, the Wisconsin Council of
25 Churches believes that it is the responsibility of the church, the body of Christ, to reinforce God's
26 message of community, of stewardship, of mutual support for one another and for the
27 environment.

28 ***The purpose of this statement***

29
30 This statement on economic justice, then, is based on our belief that God's intention for us
31 to live in harmony, in fellowship and with respect for one another and the earth is one that has not
32 changed since the beginning of time. In order for us to live that way, everyone must have enough
33 resources; each person should have according to his or her need.

34 Indeed, God has always provided enough. As the people of God journeyed from the Garden
35 of Eden through 40 years in the wilderness and on to the Land of Milk and Honey, God provided
36 for their needs:

37 "Remember the long way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the
38 wilderness, in order to humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether
39 or not you would keep his commandments. He humbled you by letting you hunger, then
40 by feeding you with manna, with which neither you nor your ancestors were acquainted,
41 in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word
42 that comes from the mouth of the Lord. The clothes on your back did not wear out and
43 your feet did not swell these forty years. Know then in your heart that as a parent
44 disciplines a child so the Lord your God disciplines you. Therefore keep the
45 commandments of the Lord your God, by walking in his ways and by fearing him. For the
46 Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land with flowing streams, with springs
47 and underground waters welling up in valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of
48 vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, a land where you
49 may eat bread without scarcity, where you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron

50 and from whose hills you may mine copper. You shall eat your fill and bless the Lord your
51 God for the good land that he has given you." (Deuteronomy 8:2-10)

52 With this statement, the Wisconsin Council of Churches recognizes that the church must
53 determine how to properly be in the world, yet resist being of the world. We, as God's people,
54 have not allowed ourselves to be used as God's instruments to care for brothers and sisters in
55 need. With the needs of so many increasing so greatly, the church cannot work in a vacuum and
56 expect to address the ills of society. The church must take responsibility for change and be willing
57 to work through social structures like government in order to achieve social and economic justice
58 for those whom Jesus calls us to serve the most. It is the responsibility of the church to work to
59 transform the priorities of society from the trust of wealth to the trust of God.

60 Then someone came to Jesus and said, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have
61 eternal life?" And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only
62 one who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments." He said to him,
63 "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery;
64 You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; Honor your father and mother; also,
65 You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The young man said to him, "I have kept all
66 these; and what do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your
67 possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then
68 come, follow me." When the young man heard this word, he went away grieving, for he
69 had many possessions." (Matthew 19:16-22)

70 ***God's directive to provide for "the least of these"***

71
72 Throughout the Old Testament and in Old Testament history there is great evidence of
73 voluntary acts of charity as a priority in Israel's corporate life. Yet, the very word "charity" has
74 connotations today that it did not have in biblical times. We tend to think of charity as something
75 that we give or do at a given point in time. But biblically, charity is intended as an attitude, a way
76 in which we operate on a daily basis. It is, in fact, synonymous with justice, the act of being fair.

77 In the book of Exodus (chapters 21-23), God lays down a directive to restore social,
78 economic and religious well-being to those who are in need; a directive to be charitable. Those
79 who have sold themselves to others as a result of economic need are to be freed in the seventh,
80 or sabbatical year. The land was to rest, to regain its strength to produce, also in the sabbatical
81 year. The poor, the resident aliens, the widows and orphans were not to be exploited or
82 oppressed. The poor were to be given due process, or proper justice, in legal matters. Anyone
83 who hurt the poor would have to answer to God:

84 "If you do abuse them, when they cry out to me, I will surely heed their cry; and my wrath
85 will burn...." (Exodus 22:23-24a).

86 But perhaps nowhere is Scripture more instructive relative to those who ignore the plight of
87 the poor than those words from the mouths of the eighth century (before Christ) prophets Amos,
88 Isaiah, and Micah. They condemn those who not only ignore the poor but those who make laws
89 that have ill effect on the poor:

90 "Ah, you who make iniquitous decrees, who write oppressive statutes, to turn aside the
91 needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right . . . What will you do on
92 the day of punishment. . . ?" (Isa. 10:1-3a) and "They covet fields, and seize them;
93 houses, and take them away; they oppress householder and house, people and their
94 inheritance. Therefore thus says the Lord: Now, I am devising against this family an evil
95 From which you cannot remove your necks; And you shall not walk haughtily, For it will
96 be an evil time." (Micah 2:1-3)

97 Indeed, the New Testament also draws attention to the needs of the poor. Jesus Christ proclaims:

98 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to
99 the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives And recovery of sight to the
100 blind, To let the oppressed go free, To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Luke 4:18-
101 19)

102 Jesus' authoritative words turned the world around him upside down. Those people who are
103 the least in the sight of human beings, culture and society, are the very ones he declares must
104 and will be helped the most. He contradicts the world's view of success. He turns the world
105 upside down in order to get it right side up and calls upon his followers to do the same. Jesus
106 deliberately identified himself with the poor as an act of loving compassion, therefore challenging
107 the rest of us to respond in kind.

108 ***What are the causes of poverty?***

109
110 Many people are born into poverty and some find themselves forced into poverty as a result
111 of other circumstances. Racism, gender discrimination, lack of education, political strife, and
112 government corruption are factors that lead to poverty around the world. Poverty can also be the
113 result of mismanagement of money and power by individuals, churches, businesses,
114 governments and other institutions.

115 ***The special responsibilities of the wealthy***

116
117 Neither the Hebrew scriptures nor the New Testament object to wealth nor convict the
118 wealthy for what they have attained (unless by unscrupulous methods).

119 However, there is great danger lurking in wealth: greed. Knowing that, God also made it
120 clear that inherent in the blessings of wealth is God's directive to use that wealth to meet the
121 needs of the poor:

122 "Give liberally [to your brother or sister] and be ungrudging when you do so, for on this
123 account the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake."
124 Deuteronomy 15:10

125 Wealth is intended by God to be shared, not hoarded, not accumulated:

126 "The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who
127 sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up
128 your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God
129 is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough
130 of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work." (2 Corinthians 9:6-8)

131 ***How wealth is to be apportioned***

132
133 While we have come to think of property as our accumulated possessions, property in the
134 Hebrew scriptures refers to the land. Such property was a gift from God; it was sacred. Yet while
135 it was a gift to God's people, they held it not as a personal possession but as stewards. God
136 maintained ownership and the stewards of the land who were given dominion over it were to see
137 that it was properly maintained in a way that it would provide not only for the family who tended it,
138 but for the poor who would benefit from the family's tithe. Yet, today, wealth is held in the hands
139 of a very few and land is but one symbol of wealth.

140 The Apostle Paul adds light to that discussion:

141 "As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set
142 their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with
143 everything for our enjoyment. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous
144 and ready to share, thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for
145 the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life." (emphasis added) (1
146 Timothy 6:17-19)

147 The Wisconsin Council of Churches recognizes that wealth comes in varying degrees and
148 forms. We know that all believers are given gifts of the Spirit to be used for the building of the
149 Church. We know there are conscientious businesspeople and corporations who strive to be
150 responsible by producing quality products that also provide jobs and benefits for their employees.
151 We celebrate those who have used their wealth for charitable causes and who provide the solid
152 fiscal foundation from which philanthropy and job creation can take place. We know there are
153 many people who have taken up public service as a career, from teachers to government
154 workers, to elected officials, and who are striving to find ways to resolve discrepancies in wages
155 and class and property.

156 But there remains a chasm between those who have and those who have not. Farmers who
157 for generations have considered farming not a business but a "way of life" find it difficult to survive
158 in an economy that calls for cheap food at the expense of the producer and, at the same time,
159 fails to provide food for those who need it the most. There are businesspeople who would, at the
160 expense of their employees and the environment, seek higher personal profits for themselves
161 without thought for the dignity and well-being of those who work for them. There are those in
162 public service who have bowed to high-powered interests and have advocated passed legislation
163 that has been detrimental to or does not address at all the disparity between the rich and the
164 poor.

165 The plain fact of the matter is that since God provides all that we need and yet there are
166 people who do not have enough to eat or drink or a safe place to sleep, then we can only
167 conclude that there are some who have too much and who have not adequately shared what they
168 have been given.

169 ***Avenues of economic justice***

170
171 Specifically, the Wisconsin Council of Churches declares our intention to seek economic
172 justice through such avenues as:

- 173 • Continued efforts to reduce poverty;
- 174 • Opportunities in all forms for children, families, singles and elders so as to ensure the full
175 potential and dignity of each person;
- 176 • Racial, ethnic, and gender equality in all sectors of the economy;
- 177 • Employment standards that are fair, where workers are paid a just and fair wage and
178 where benefits are provided where possible (including the farm sector and with migrant
179 workers), and, when unemployment occurs, access to public or private assistance for
180 those people who cannot work or for whom there are no jobs available.
- 181 • The right of private and public employees to choose to organize and bargain collectively,
182 so each and all may participate more effectively in decisions that affect them and protect
183 the dignity and well-being of themselves and their families. Workers and employers are
184 responsible for negotiating in good faith and considering how their decisions will affect
185 the common good.
- 186 • Decent and affordable housing;
- 187 • Quality public education that is funded adequately and fairly, recognizing the needs of
188 rural schools and those with large numbers of poor, students needing special education,
189 and children for whom English is their second language; and that is protected against
190 measures that are punitive and that undermine a public commitment to the common
191 good;

- 192 • Access to basic health care that provides for the whole of the person, physical and
- 193 mental;
- 194 • Sustainable agricultural practices, fair prices and income for farmers and farm workers,
- 195 and ensuring a safe food supply for all of those who hunger and thirst;
- 196 • Environmental laws and regulations that ensure the long-term productivity and protection
- 197 of the land;
- 198 • Taxation that gives relief to those who need it most and addresses the gap between the
- 199 rich and the poor;
- 200 • Access to government through an open process and financing of elections that attracts
- 201 those who would be our most able leaders, not just those who can afford to run;
- 202 • Reforms of the political process that will make our elected leaders more accountable to
- 203 the people rather than to special interest money, and that will promote civic participation
- 204 by assuring citizens that their votes count and that government can work fairly and
- 205 effectively for the benefit of all;
- 206 • International trade systems and treaties that protect worker justice, human rights,
- 207 environmental standards, and democratic process;
- 208 • Community development programs that uphold the integrity of our citizens and our
- 209 environment.
- 210 • Immigration policies that prioritize family reunification, protect workers' rights, and enforce
- 211 immigration laws with justice and compassion; and increased efforts to address the root
- 212 causes of international migration in poverty, war, persecution, and environmental
- 213 degradation.
- 214 • Increasing our nation's capacity to respond to the growing need for refugee protection,
- 215 resettlement, and integration.

216
217 ***The church, its role, and the realities of the world***

218
219 The church has remained silent on many of these issues, fearful of reaction from the people
220 in the pews. We have shunned controversy. We share the guilt of those who have not worked for
221 economic justice. In addition, the church is not exempt from the creation and maintenance of
222 economic injustice and must take its own responsibility for it. Therefore, we recognize several
223 realities in our world:

- 224 • The globalization of the economy has changed the face of the way business is done in
- 225 the world, even to the extent of concentrating power and money in private corporations
- 226 that exceed the size of some entire countries.
- 227 • The political arena is made up of political parties and people in them whose beliefs span
- 228 a continuum and often find themselves polarized in their positions rather than finding
- 229 common ground.
- 230 • There is an unrecognized tension between freedom and equality, between rights and
- 231 responsibilities. The more some have of one, the less others have of another. Sometimes
- 232 freedoms must be sacrificed for the common good.
- 233 • Our church members are among those who are voting for and serving as elected officials.
- 234 It is not a matter of us vs. them.
- 235 • The role of government is to seek justice for all people and to uphold the common good.
- 236 But justice cannot be achieved when the democratic process is not just and fair for all.
- 237 Economic justice is challenged and compromised when money from special interest
- 238 groups influences the choice of candidates for public office, the redrawing of legislative
- 239 districts, and the conduct of election campaigns. The influence of money in campaigns
- 240 for public office undermines democracy and feeds cynicism concerning public integrity
- 241 and the validity of elected leadership.
- 242 • The role of the church is one of a voice crying in the wilderness, a prophet for those with
- 243 whom we live and work. At the same time we must also seek progress in small steps and
- 244 compromise and celebrate every time diverse minds come together to empower those
- 245 who can least provide for themselves. The church must be a model for open and healthy

246 dialogue, respectful of a vast array of opinions, seeking common ground, and open to
247 compromise in a legislative process that often demands that small steps be taken on the
248 road to reform. Compromise must not sacrifice our prophetic voice; it can be a means to
249 let that voice be heard.

250 **Conclusion**

251
252 On that day by the Sea of Galilee when a young boy handed over his five barley loaves and
253 two fish to Jesus, even Jesus' disciples were skeptical of how far so little could stretch. Yet the
254 Master was able to feed a crowd of five thousand men and with them the women and children.
255 They were not only satisfied, there was enough left over to fill 12 baskets. (John 6)

256 When we doubt how much we can accomplish through personal change and through
257 political change, we fail to give credit to the One who will use us to further the Kingdom of God.
258 We need only to remember what the Lord requires of us: "to do justice, and to love kindness, and
259 to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8)

260 "Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, beloved, to admonish the idlers,
261 encourage the faint hearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them. See that none of you
262 repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. Rejoice always, pray
263 without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
264 Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to
265 what is good; abstain from every form of evil." (1 Thessalonians 5:12-22).

1 **Statement on Nonviolence**

2 *April, 2002*

3 ***Introduction***

4 Violence is an ever-present reality in our society. Every day the media confronts us with reports of
5 spouse and child abuse, attacks on women, minorities and gay and lesbian people, ethnic
6 cleansing, terrorism and war. These occurrences inflict incalculable suffering on millions of people
7 all over the world and create an environment of fear that terrorizes millions more.

8 Faithfulness to its mission requires the Church to speak out against violence, minister to its
9 victims and work tirelessly to reduce the level of violence in society. To do this effectively it is
10 necessary to identify and address the causes of violence. One of the most important, most hidden
11 and least understood of these is structural injustice.

12 **What is structural injustice?**

13 Structural injustice is the oppression and exploitation many people experience, because the
14 social structures and policies that affect their lives are controlled by and benefit disproportionately
15 elite groups at the expense of the masses.

16 Structural injustice is perhaps most obvious in the economic sector of society. In unregulated,
17 free market economies maximization of profit is the main motivation for economic enterprise.
18 Large corporations, the main economic actors in such economies, have enormous power, which
19 they often use to keep wages and corporate taxes low and to lobby against government
20 regulations such as laws protecting workers or the environment. These corporations produce an
21 abundance of the goods and services people with buying power want, but for economic reasons
22 they often ignore or address inadequately the needs of poor people and of society as a whole. Bill
23 Gates, one of the world's most successful capitalists at the turn of the third millennium,
24 acknowledged these inadequacies of the free market when he gave one billion dollars to fight
25 AIDS in Africa. He said that although there was an urgent need for this work, the market would
26 not respond to it because it wouldn't be profitable enough.

27 Structural injustice, which many see as a form of violence, may be most easily recognized in the
28 economy, but it is present in all other sectors of society as well, including religion. The Church,
29 itself, is not free of it. Indeed, the Church has sometimes supported or even employed overt forms
30 of violence. The Crusades, the Inquisition, the Thirty Years War, the burning of "witches" in
31 medieval Europe and colonial Massachusetts, the torture and execution of heretics by both
32 Protestants and Catholics at the time of the Reformation, and the centuries-long persecution of
33 Jews are dramatic examples of this. It grieves us deeply that religiously motivated violence and
34 violence in the name of religion are continuing and even growing problems in our world. For that
35 reason we rejoice that Pope John Paul II began the Third Millennium on an honest and hopeful
36 note by publicly acknowledging and repenting of these acts and calling the Church to a more
37 consistent and faithful practice of nonviolence. We also rejoice that, although extremist groups
38 still engage in acts of overt violence in the name of Christ or the Church, these acts are no longer
39 officially endorsed or legitimated by the institutional Church.

40 Structural injustice, however, remains more common. When growth and profitability become the
41 Church's major goals, structural injustice is often the result, because these goals can easily lead
42 the Church away from Jesus' injunction to make the well being of "the least of my brothers and
43 sisters" a priority. When this happens, the Church, pursuing success as the world understands it,

44 organizes its life around the preferences of affluent and powerful groups. It adopts more-or-less
45 uncritically the culture of these groups and starts new parishes primarily among them while
46 abandoning many poor, inner-city congregations. This is an example of structural injustice in the
47 life of the Church, because, through these practices, it serves the powerful while neglecting the
48 needs of poor and marginalized people.

49 Jesus calls the Church to be concerned about the well being of the earth and all its inhabitants
50 and to minister to the victims of violence. It does this through Word and Sacrament, pastoral care,
51 social services, and worldwide humanitarian programs. Through faith-based public policy
52 advocacy it also urges governments to seek alternatives to violence in addressing social
53 problems and resolving social conflicts. The Church's inspiration for this work is the gospel of
54 Jesus Christ.

55 **Jesus' proclamation of God's reign**

56 Although there are numerous, troubling passages in the Bible itself that legitimate violence, at its
57 heart the biblical message is about a God who is full of compassion and who ceaselessly works
58 to transform the world through love. In this transformed world, peace and justice will kiss each
59 other (Psalm 85:10), poverty will be no more (Deuteronomy 15:4) and war between nations will
60 be a thing of the past (Isaiah 2:4). The Hebrew scriptures use the word "shalom" to describe this
61 New World which God is bringing into being. Shalom is the total well being of the whole world and
62 all its inhabitants. The Bible portrays Shalom as God's will for the world and pictures God as
63 relentless in pursuit of Shalom.

64 Christians believe and the Church teaches that in Jesus of Nazareth God's work in behalf of
65 shalom reaches a new intensity. Jesus announces and initiates the Reign of God on earth. The
66 Reign of God is the New World, the world of Shalom that God is bringing into being among us.

67 Jesus' proclamation of God's reign brings him into conflict with the powerful who control the social
68 structures of his society. He boldly exposes the oppressive role these structures are playing in
69 communal life and shows how incompatible many of their present practices are with life in the
70 Kingdom of God. Jesus is particularly critical of his society's religious structures and practices. He
71 breaks the Sabbath and purity laws as they were understood and applied by the religious leaders
72 of his society. These laws regulated relationships between "the Righteous" and women, poor
73 people, lame people, blind people, people with leprosy, prostitutes and others considered unclean
74 by the religious elite.

75 Jesus also challenged in a unique way the political structures of his time and the beliefs and
76 values on which they were based. When his disciples argue about which one is the greatest, he
77 says to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are
78 called Benefactors. But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the
79 youngest and the leader like one who serves." (Luke 22:25-26) To understand the political
80 undertones of this saying, it is important to know that Benefactor is one of the titles of Tiberius
81 Caesar, Jesus' emperor.

82 Both in his time and in our own, those who hear and understand Jesus' message realize that he
83 threatens the status quo by calling individuals to radical repentance and also by calling for radical
84 change in the way society is organized and functions.

85 **God as Abba**

86 Jesus' experience of God is the inspiration for his message about God's Reign as a reign of love.
87 For Jesus, God is not a distant, condemning and wrathful sovereign waiting to punish everyone
88 who makes a false move.

89 Jesus experiences God as "Abba." Abba is the affectionate, intimate name that a little child calls
90 a loving father whom she knows loves her, whom she can trust, with whom she knows she is safe
91 and whom she knows wants the best for her. For Jesus, the transcendent Holy One is Abba, the
92 Lover of humanity, who longs to draw all people into the beloved community.

93 Jesus' teaching and ministry reflect the universal love and welcome that he experiences from
94 God. Like God, Jesus welcomes all, especially those usually excluded--people with leprosy,
95 handicapped people, poor people, beggars, thieves, and prostitutes--in other words those whom
96 righteous, religious and important people consider of no account. "Tax collectors and prostitutes
97 are going into the Kingdom of God ahead of you," Jesus told the chief priests and elders of the
98 people. (Matthew 21:31). It should come as no surprise that these leaders, as well as the Roman
99 authorities with whom they collaborated, thought Jesus was dangerous and felt they had a
100 responsibility to eliminate him before he undermined the social systems they administered and in
101 which they found their security.

102 **Gospel nonviolence**

103 Jesus is aware of their plot, but he responds in an extraordinary way. On the one hand, he
104 refuses to be intimidated. He continues to preach and live God's reign of grace and unconditional
105 love in spite of growing opposition and danger. On the other hand, he will not use violence to
106 defend himself or the Reign of God that he came to initiate on earth. He trusts God, his Abba, and
107 commends himself to God's care. Most remarkably, he continues to love his enemies, even after
108 he is aware of their plot to kill him. When the disciples tried to defend him in the Garden, Jesus
109 told them to put their swords away. "All who take the sword will perish by the sword," he said.
110 (Matthew 26:52). As he hung on the cross, dying and in pain, Jesus prayed for his executioners,
111 "Abba, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34) Jesus asks God to
112 include in the Kingdom even those who are killing him. Christians believe that God raised Jesus
113 from the dead, demonstrating that his nonviolent, suffering love is the most powerful reality in the
114 universe, more powerful even than death.

115 **The call to discipleship**

116 Jesus calls us to share in his ministry and way of life. His vision of the Reign of God is our
117 inspiration and guide. We are to resist evil and oppose violence, but not by evil or violent means.
118 We are to love our enemies, even those who seek to destroy us, and pray for those who
119 persecute us. This is a counter-intuitive and counter-cultural mandate. Millions of years of
120 evolution and millennia of social conditioning have programmed us not to love enemies who
121 threaten our lives, but to flee from them or to destroy them before they can destroy us. It is
122 impossible for us to change ourselves. But the Spirit of God, dwelling within us, can transform us.
123 The Spirit can open our hearts so that we begin to understand the beauty and joy of nonviolent
124 life in the Reign of God, embrace it, however haltingly, in our personal lives and relationships and
125 work to make it a reality in the world.

126 **Nonviolence in the history of the Church**

127 Nonviolence was a very important part of Christian life and witness in the early Church. The most
128 often quoted saying of Jesus in the first centuries was his teaching that we should love our
129 enemies. All Christian writings from the first 300 years that have survived, if they speak about the
130 subject at all, describe Christians as people who refuse to participate in violent activities such as
131 war, gladiatorial games or public executions. These words of Lactantius, a theologian who lived
132 around the year 300, express well the early Church's consensus about the incompatibility of
133 violence with Christian life.

134 "When God prohibits killing, he not only forbids us to commit brigandage, which is not allowed
135 even by the public laws, but he warns us not to do even those things which are regarded as legal
136 among men. And so it will not be lawful for a just (person) to serve as a soldier, since justice itself
137 is his military service-nor to accuse anyone of a capital offense, because it makes no difference
138 whether you kill with a sword or with a word, since killing itself is forbidden. And so in this
139 commandment of God, no exception at all ought to be made to the rule that it is always wrong to
140 kill a (human being), whom God has wished to be a sacrosanct creature." (John Ferguson, *The*
141 *Politics of Love*, p. 61.)

142
143 Although this teaching of the early Church never completely died out, after Christianity became
144 the official religion of the Roman Empire it was pushed to the margins of the Church. The
145 theological tradition that became dominant after 300 and remains so today teaches that God
146 might call saints like Francis of Assisi or Mother Teresa to embrace a nonviolent way of life. But,
147 according to this later tradition, nonviolence is not a part of the ordinary Believer's calling and has
148 very little if any relevance for the institutional life of society. This later tradition also teaches that
149 social systems and institutions cannot function without violence and that effective leaders cannot
150 consistently act nonviolently. Nor, according to this tradition, did Jesus ever intend his nonviolent
151 teaching and example to apply to society.

152 **Rediscovery of gospel nonviolence**

153 In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries several Christians, including the novelist, Leo
154 Tolstoi, rediscovered Jesus' nonviolence. However, more than anyone else it was the Hindu,
155 Mohandas K. Gandhi, who explored its meaning for society. Gandhi applied the nonviolence he
156 claimed to have learned from Jesus in new and revolutionary ways. Through his "experiments
157 with truth," he disproved the idea that Jesus' teaching on nonviolence can have no relevance for
158 society or that it is reserved for special saints. He brought Jesus' ethic of nonviolence into the
159 Town Square and even the battlefield. His commitment to nonviolence was religious. He believed
160 in nonviolence not because it was successful but because it was right. But he also tried to prove
161 that a courageous, fierce but loving nonviolence like that of Jesus, when practiced on a mass
162 scale by committed and courageous people, is a powerful method of social transformation.
163 Gandhi repeatedly acknowledged that Jesus, particularly his Sermon on the Mount, was the chief
164 inspiration and guide for his work.

165 Gandhi's experiments with nonviolence inspired many others to take up this work. Among the
166 best-known are Martin Luther King, Jr., Cesar Chavez, Desmond Tutu, and Dorothy Day.
167 Corazon Aquino, Lech Walesa, Vaclav Havel, Oscar Romero, Nelson Mandela and many other
168 leaders of the nonviolent revolutions that swept through the Philippines, South Africa, Eastern
169 and Central Europe, the Soviet Union, and Central America in the waning years of the twentieth
170 century are also among the disciples of Gandhi. Some of these leaders do not reject violence
171 absolutely but are proponents of the Just War theory, which has played such an important role in
172 Church history. This theory is often misused as a justification for war, but when responsibly
173 applied, it is only a short step from Gospel nonviolence. Those who espouse and responsibly
174 apply it remind us that, while Jesus calls us to a life of nonviolence, we still confront situations in
175 the world which are ambiguous and confusing. In light of this ambiguity, some Christian leaders,
176 although agreeing that violence is always both tragic and sinful, have concluded that there are
177 extreme situations that justify the use of limited violence against evil when all other possibilities
178 seem to be exhausted. Dietrich Bonhoeffer is an example of such a Christian.

179 **Our commitment**

180 Nonviolence both as a personal way of life and as a way of transforming society is rooted in and
181 inspired by the life and teaching of Jesus. It was affirmed and nurtured by the early Church.
182 Therefore the institutional Church today has a particular responsibility to support and promote it.
183 As Church leaders, we confess that we have often failed in this responsibility. We repent of our

184 failure and ask God to forgive us and give us the courage we need both to embrace nonviolence
185 in our personal lives and relationships and also in our work for social justice and peace in the
186 world. In the spirit of repentance and hope, the Wisconsin Council of Churches, a community of
187 churches that proclaim the Triune God as revealed in Jesus Christ, commits itself, as opportunity
188 and resources allow, to:

- 189 • Urge member Churches to examine their policies and practices for instances of
190 institutional violence and work to eliminate any they discover;
- 191 • Encourage Christian leaders to lift up Jesus' vision of nonviolence in their preaching,
192 teaching and liturgical ministries;
- 193 • Support the United Nations Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the
194 Children of the World (2001-2010) by sponsoring educational events, making resources
195 on nonviolence available and promoting training in nonviolence;
- 196 • Work to reduce and eventually eliminate weapons of mass destruction and land mines;
- 197 • Advocate for the dignity and civil rights of all persons and groups and speak out against
198 expressions of hatred or acts of violence directed against persons or groups because of
199 their race, nationality, culture, ethnic group, religion, political position, gender or sexual
200 orientation;
- 201 • Seek common ground among all those concerned about the problem of unwanted
202 pregnancies so people who take different points of view will be able to work together both
203 to reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies and abortions and to promote the welfare
204 of all children;
- 205 • Support efforts to reduce violence in the media;
- 206 • Advocate restraint in defense spending;
- 207 • Advocate legislation that keeps guns out of the hands of unstable or dangerous persons;
- 208 • Cooperate with groups working nonviolently for economic justice and peace when their
209 work is compatible with the faith and values of the Wisconsin Council of Churches and its
210 member churches;
- 211 • Work nonviolently in behalf of the goals outlined in the Wisconsin Council of Churches'
212 statement on economic justice;
- 213 • Support efforts to end domestic violence and provide safe haven for abused spouses and
214 children;
- 215 • Advocate in behalf of adequate legal services for all, alternatives to incarceration for
216 nonviolent crimes and a criminal justice system that strives for restorative justice,
217 restitution, rehabilitation and reconciliation rather than retribution. This includes continued
218 opposition to the death penalty and other cruel and unusual punishments such as
219 prolonged solitary confinement and sensory deprivation.

220 April 2002

1 **Reconciled in Christ with Creator and Creation:**

2 **The Worshipful Work of Caring for the Earth and People**

3 Wisconsin Council of Churches Policy Statement, Adopted December 12, 2006.

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+ + +

6 *A note about this statement: Policy statements of the Wisconsin Council of Churches express the*
7 *biblical, theological, and ethical grounds for the Council's work and witness regarding matters of*
8 *concern to God's people in the world. They are not binding on member churches, but provide*
9 *direction and guidance for the Council's education, and worship, advocacy and programming.*
10 *We hope that they may also be helpful and inspiring to anyone who seeks to think and live as a*
11 *Christian disciple in the public realm.*

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+ + +

14 *As members of the Wisconsin Council of Churches "We pray and work together for . . . the*
15 *healing and reconciliation of the world." "The world" includes the natural environment, and our*
16 *care for creation is a matter of praying as well as working – it is "worshipful work." Thus, this*
17 *statement reflects a pattern familiar in our traditions of worship: Invocation, Confession and*
18 *Repentance, Proclamation, Response, and Sending Forth.*

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I. God, Humanity, Nature

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From Genesis through Revelation, scripture repeatedly affirms that the whole earth is God's good creation, filled with the divine glory and mirroring God's wisdom, mystery, and majesty (Is. 6:3; Rom 1:20).¹ All creation is a gift. By God's grace this planet is a life-sustaining home for us and for all earth's creatures (Gen 1, Ps 104). The whole creation depends on God, to whom all things belong (Ps. 24:1). God loves the world, the *kosmos*, (John 3:16-17) and we cannot love God without loving what God loves.

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Daily we receive God's gifts through the complex, interdependent ecological web into which our lives are woven: gifts of physical and mental health, beauty, material resources, the shared basis for community, and a diverse environment. Study of the natural world gives us knowledge that is useful and that deepens our awe and appreciation for the Creator and the creation.

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We are human creatures, dependent on the rest of creation. While we have great abilities to transform matter and energy, we can create neither. We are fellow creatures with all that God has made, sharing with them a common origin and destiny (Gen 1, Rom 8, Rev. 22). As divine images reflecting God's gracious love and care, we have been given the special vocation of caring for creation, and special gifts for appreciating, understanding, cultivating, and protecting it (Gen 1:28, 2:15).

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II. A Threatened Creation

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Arrogance, greed, and ignorance, however, have distorted this calling into a domination that exploits and degrades both human beings and the natural world. Social injustice and ecological destruction are manifestations of sin (Isa.5:8-10, 24:4-7).

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The consequences of this distortion of our calling are many: global climate change; biodiversity loss; air and water pollution; environmental health hazards; urban sprawl; loss of forests, rivers and farmland; the loss of natural beauty; loss of contact with the natural world, and much more.

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Locked in a vicious cycle with these environmental problems are hunger, war and preparations for war, poverty, and injustice. "We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny."² The poor and vulnerable suffer the most from environmental

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54 degradation. Poverty and insecurity, in turn, lead people to over-exploit their local environments,
55 which contributes to political and armed conflicts that cause further destruction and displace
56 people from their land. The more affluent among us consume more than a fair share of the earth's
57 resources, often in ways that undermine creation's integrity and harm our human neighbors. But
58 benefiting economically from the abuse of earth and people diminishes us morally and spiritually.
59

60 Our political and economic policies take too little account of the consequences of our actions.
61 Industrial civilization is on a collision course with environmental limits – if we have not already
62 exceeded them. Future generations will reap a bitter harvest from the seeds we sow (Hos. 8:7).
63

64 We must change our ways. Our means of producing energy, food and other necessities must
65 become more just and sustainable. Responsible economic development can meet human needs
66 over the long term while maintaining ecological integrity.
67

68 **III. Repentance and Commitment**

69
70 As citizens of Wisconsin, we have enjoyed the beauty and the bounty of our state and wish to
71 preserve it for all who live here and for those who come after us.
72

73 Past and present generations have not always treated the land, the waters, their inhabitants, and
74 our neighbors with care or respect. Yet we are grateful for the legacies of the native peoples of
75 Wisconsin, and for Aldo Leopold, John Muir, Sigurd Olson, Gaylord Nelson, Philip Lewis, and
76 many others who have sought to show a better way to inhabit the earth.³ We know that change is
77 urgently needed if we and our descendants are to continue to enjoy the blessings of this gifted
78 land.
79

80 Because of the extended reach of technology, trade and communications, our actions have global
81 consequences, and events far away affect our own communities. Our responsibilities are
82 national and global as well as local.
83

84 As members of the Wisconsin Council of Churches, we call ourselves and our fellow citizens to
85 repentance and to a renewed commitment to responsible living in our part of Creation. As
86 Christian communities, we have a responsibility to lift up the ethical and spiritual values that must
87 guide our behavior as members of earth's household.⁴
88

89 **IV. Having The Mind of Christ**

90
91 As Christians, our pursuit of a just, sustainable, and life-sustaining world is energized and guided
92 by our faith in Jesus Christ. We see Christ's face in all people, especially the "least" among us
93 (Mt. 25:31-46). We desire to have the mind of Christ, who in the Incarnation took the form of a
94 servant (Phil. 2:5-8), and who in his life and ministry challenged the structures of imperial and
95 religious domination of his day (Mt.20:25-28). Today, the voiceless and vulnerable victims of
96 domination we are called to serve and defend include future generations and the natural world as
97 well as the poor.
98

99 **V. Principles for Witness and Discipleship in Public Life**

100
101 Christian witness and discipleship is lived out in public as well as personal life. The Wisconsin
102 Council of Churches is committed to the following principles in our advocacy for environmentally
103 responsible policies in national and state government, businesses, churches, and other
104 organizations:
105

106 *Respect for the whole earth community.* As we provide for ourselves and our human neighbors,
107 we must also provide for the survival and well-being of our fellow creatures in their habitats.
108 Following the principle of the Sabbath, we must recognize creation's limits and its need for
109 rhythms of rest and recuperation: we cannot press creatures to produce for us in ways that violate

110 their integrity (Ex. 23:10-12). Remembering the story of Noah we realize that all creatures –
111 “clean and unclean” – are valued by God regardless of their usefulness for human beings.

112
113 *A comprehensive view of the common good.* Peace, justice, and sustainability are
114 interdependent. Each is essential to the common good of life in all its forms. Environmentally
115 unsustainable practices undercut our efforts to achieve justice and peace for all persons; violence
116 and injustice undermine sustainability. Nor is a violent, unjust, and ecologically impoverished
117 society the sort of society we wish to sustain.

118
119 *Sustainable sufficiency for all.* Over-consumption of natural resources by a relative few is a major
120 cause of environmental degradation. At the same time, many have barely enough to survive. A
121 more equitable and sustainable sharing of the earth’s bounty will require more efficient
122 technologies for meeting human needs, as well as a reduced consumption and increased
123 conservation ethic by those who already have more than enough.

124
125 *Environmental rights for all persons.* All human beings have the right to a safe and healthy
126 environment as well as access to essential natural resources such as food, water, and energy.
127 They also have the right to the material and social conditions for contented and dignified lives;
128 and for rich and rewarding relationships with one another and with the natural world. The needs
129 of the most vulnerable and marginalized people must be given special attention.

130
131 *Responsibility for the future.* The beauty, integrity, and diversity of the earth, as well as its
132 material resources, are an inheritance from the past that we hold in trust for future generations.
133 The decisions we make now will affect their well-being. We must not foreclose their opportunities
134 by exhausting nonrenewable resources, causing major long-term or irreversible global
135 environmental changes, or diminishing the continued fruitfulness of the earth by overexploiting
136 renewable resources.

137
138 *Democratic participation.* Effective environmental policymaking requires well-informed
139 participation by members of the community in the decisions that affect them. Democracy must
140 serve the good of all, rather than the desires of a powerful few who stand to benefit in material
141 terms from the destructive exploitation of people and the earth. As we are all sustained by the
142 resources and life-support systems of this planet, so we also share a common responsibility for
143 conserving, protecting, and restoring them.

144
145 *Prudence.* There are limits to our ability to predict, control, or defend ourselves against the
146 consequences of our actions. We do not have the luxury of certainty, but when the best available
147 evidence and interpretation indicate that a particular course of action – or inaction – could
148 jeopardize future well-being, prudence requires us to respond appropriately, even if that means
149 making challenging and far-reaching changes in our way of life.

150
151 *Support for stewards of the land.* As fewer of us are directly engaged in making our living from
152 the land, we depend on farmers, farm workers, and others who help us to meet our needs from
153 creation’s bounty. We must seek justice for them while encouraging environmentally healthy and
154 sustainable forms of agriculture, forestry, and fishing. We especially owe smaller family farmers a
155 just livelihood so they can support themselves, their families, and their communities while acting
156 on our behalf as good stewards of the land.

157 158 **VI. The Charge to the Church**

159
160 The Holy Spirit calls the church, as Christ’s body in the world, to reflect in word and action God’s
161 intention to reconcile the whole creation (Col. 1). This calling is not an optional activity to be
162 relegated to a congregation’s social ministry committee, but belongs to the whole worshipful work
163 of every congregation. Therefore, the Wisconsin Council of Churches is committed to the care of
164 creation as integral to its mission:
165

- 166 ☉ In doxology – Offering praise, honor, and gratitude to the Creator by celebrating and
 167 appreciating the Creation;
 168 ☉ In confession – Facing the truth of our situation without complacency or despair, and
 169 accepting our own complicity in Earth’s distress;
 170 ☉ In teaching – Forming disciples who accept their responsibility to care for creation in their
 171 community and the world;
 172 ☉ In service – Protecting and restoring creation and helping others to have livelihoods of
 173 sustainable sufficiency;
 174 ☉ In advocacy – Reminding the government, private enterprise, and the public of their
 175 responsibility for the common good, and speaking out on behalf of the voiceless;
 176 ☉ In daily life – Actively redefining the “good life” in contrast to the culture of materialistic
 177 consumerism, and as based on abundant life in Christ Jesus, who offers to all the
 178 inexhaustible and infinitely renewable gifts of love, grace, justice, and peace.
 179

180 *December 2006*

181
 182

ENDNOTES

¹ See www.nrpe.org and www.creationcare.org for collections of biblical references on creation and creation care. See www.nccecojustice.org and www.nrpe.org for collections and excerpts of related denominational statements.

² Martin Luther King, “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.”

³ **Aldo Leopold** (1887-1948) was Professor of Wildlife Management at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the author of *A Sand County Almanac*. He wrote that our ethics must include concern for the health of the land as an interdependent community of living things, to which human beings belong. (www.aldoleopold.org)

John Muir (1838-1914) emigrated to Wisconsin from Scotland as a child. A naturalist, writer, and pioneering conservationist with a deep and ecstatic love for creation, he campaigned vigorously for wilderness preservation and founded the Sierra Club. (http://www.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/)

Gaylord Nelson (1916-2005) served Wisconsin as Governor and Senator. A champion of landmark environmental legislation including the Wilderness Act and the National Environmental Education Act, he is best known as the founder of Earth Day. The Nelson Institute of Environmental Studies at the University of Wisconsin – Madison is named for him. (<http://www.ies.wisc.edu/>)

Sigurd Olson (1899-1982) writer and conservationist, grew up in northern Wisconsin. He was instrumental in establishing the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. Olson and Nelson were keynote speakers at a 1971 conference at Northland College, Ashland, WI, which led to the founding of the Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute. (<http://www.northland.edu/soei/>)

Philip H. Lewis, Jr., landscape architect, inventoried Wisconsin’s natural areas and promoted their protection. He described his approach to environmentally sensitive land use in *Tomorrow by Design: A Regional Design Process for Sustainability* and continues his research and practice at the Marshall Erdman Academy of Sustainable Design in Madison, WI.

⁴ *Oikos*, the Greek word for “household,” is the common root of “ecology,” “economy,” and “ecumenism.”

1 **Statement on Institutional Racism and Racial Justice**

2
3 November 14, 2011

4 5 ***Preamble: Definition of Institutional Racism***

6
7 Institutional racism (also known as systemic racism) is measured not by personal attitudes, but by
8 effects. By definition, institutional racism in the U.S. is the sum of policies, practices, and attitudes
9 within an institution, government, corporation, or group that perpetuates the position of power and
10 privilege for members of the white race. Originally these policies, practices, and attitudes were
11 likely to be intentional. Now, however, they may not be consciously chosen. They have been a
12 part of the status quo long enough that they have become invisible to those who benefit from
13 them. Whites, for example, have long regarded themselves as the human norm and without a
14 consciousness of race, whereas people of color are identified by race. That invisibility of
15 whiteness has been a major expression and driver of white privilege and of institutional racism.¹

16
17 Institutional discrimination toward people of color was practiced, for example, by U.S. government
18 agencies (Veterans' Administration, U.S. Employment Service, Federal Housing Administration)
19 in the implementation of the G.I. Bill after World War II, as "African American GIs (were denied)
20 access to their benefits and to the new educational, occupational, and residential opportunities."²
21 Earlier, "during the New Deal Era of the 1930s and 1940s, both the Wagner Act and the Social
22 Security Act excluded farm workers and domestics from coverage, effectively denying those
23 disproportionately minority sectors of the work force protections and benefits routinely afforded
24 whites. The Federal Housing Act of 1934 brought home ownership within reach of millions of
25 citizens by placing the credit of the federal government behind private lending to home buyers,
26 but overtly racist categories in the Federal Housing Agency's (FHA) 'confidential' city surveys and
27 appraisers' manuals channeled almost all of the loan money toward whites and away from
28 communities of color."³

29
30 Government urban renewal programs disproportionately devastated minority communities, while
31 federal highway programs subsidized the growth of segregated suburbs.⁴ In our own time,
32 "Subsidies to the private sector by government agencies also tend to enhance the rewards of
33 past discrimination. . . . Tax-increment financing for redevelopment programs offers tax-free and
34 low-interest loans to developers"⁵

35
36 Today the effects of this past institutional discrimination can be seen in the enormous disparity in
37 wealth between whites and people of color: "The median wealth of white households is 20 times
38 that of black households and 18 times that of Hispanic households."⁶ A primary reason for this is
39 that "most white families have acquired their net worth from the appreciation of property that they
40 secured under conditions of special privilege in a discriminatory housing market."⁷

41
42 Despite examples of progress, institutional racism is manifested in people's lives as people of
43 color experience higher rates of incarceration, poorer overall health, lower educational
44 achievement, less wealth, greater limitations in housing, and fewer economic opportunities.

45 46 ***Purpose of statement***

47
48 The Wisconsin Council of Churches recognizes and acknowledges its role in the perpetuation of
49 institutional racism. In this statement we call ourselves to greater awareness of the history and
50 continuation of racism in all institutions in our society, including our member churches. We
51 recognize the long-standing role of Christian churches in the U.S. in standing alongside the state
52 in supporting policies and practices that have provided benefits and privileges for white people at
53 the expense and to the detriment of people of color. As we seek greater racial justice, we call

54 ourselves to deeper consciousness of the ways in which we participate in institutional racism. We
55 hold ourselves responsible for informed action in which maintain a critical stance in relationship to
56 the state and advocate for policies and laws that intentionally work on behalf of all people.

57
58 ***Background for statement***

59
60 Institutional racism stands within a long history of structural and systemic inequality within the
61 U.S. that began even well before the founding of this country. From the early days of “discovery”
62 of this land, to the exploitation of the indigenous people [Native Americans], to the trade and
63 enslavement of Africans, majority white Christian churches gave support to the social system and
64 provided biblical rationale for their positions and behavior which included practices of separation
65 and discrimination. Most, but not all, Protestant majority white mainline denominations
66 participated in the missionary schools that sought to take language and culture from America’s
67 indigenous peoples, and perpetuated a consciousness of “manifest destiny” that provided
68 justification for people of European heritage to see it as their right and privilege to take the lands
69 of people of indigenous heritage and former Mexican citizens.

70
71 Institutional racism resulted in the separation of people by race within most Protestant church
72 bodies. Leaders within Protestant churches played visible roles within the state. “Up until the
73 latter part of the 20th century, Christians (Protestants in particular) were the ‘spoon’ stirring the
74 melting pot: controlling immigration, education, and government; defining the moral vision and
75 ethos of America.”⁸

76
77 White superiority and privilege at the level of institutions has also played out at the community
78 and interpersonal levels as people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds have been
79 separated into different worshipping communities. The dominant cultural values and practices of
80 white people have been the invisible and often unconscious standard for thought and action,
81 leaving unexamined the policies and practices of white institutions, including churches.

82
83 Because of our role as a part of the institutional church, we take responsibility for our own
84 education in understanding structural and systemic inequities of race, culture, and class. As we
85 grow in understanding, we seek to build partnerships that are based in mutuality and respect. We
86 are encouraged by the formal ecumenical agreements that have been made between
87 denominations that are predominantly white and those with greater racial diversity or that were
88 chartered by people of color. These agreements present new opportunities for confronting
89 institutional racism in our congregations. As a faith community committed to social action, we
90 ground our advocacy in a theology that stands against injustice and that seeks equality for all of
91 God’s people. We stand within the history of the civil rights movement with its foundation in the
92 Black church experience and theology.

93
94 ***Theological foundation of statement***

95
96 Jesus’ ministry and his call for liberation that is found in the launching of his ministry in Luke 4:18
97 call us to the work of liberation.

98
99 “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to
100 the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the
101 blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lords’ favor.”

102
103 The New Testament calls us to look beyond differences in background to see our connections
104 and oneness in Christ.

105
106 “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male
107 and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28)

109 Because of our deep connection as one body in Christ, we are called to stand alongside one
110 another and to share in the lived experience of one another.

111
112 “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body,
113 though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized
114 into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one
115 Spirit. Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. . . . If all were a
116 single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one
117 body. . . . But God has so arranged the body . . . that there may be no dissension within
118 the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member
119 suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.” (I
120 Corinthians 12:12-14, 19-20, 24b-26)

121
122 Repeatedly throughout the Old Testament, we are called to live in ways of justice and peace.
123 Micah and Amos present God’s requirements:

124
125 “And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to
126 walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8)

127
128 “I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. . . .
129 Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps.
130 But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream.” (Amos
131 5:24).

132
133 The life and words of Jesus in the New Testament challenge us to see our places of privilege and
134 to walk in new ways. Jesus challenged the attitudes of ethnic separation of his time as he healed
135 the daughter of the Canaanite woman, shared time with the Samaritan woman at the well, told a
136 story of a Samaritan being neighbor, and ate with those who were considered outcasts by
137 society. He chided church leaders of his day who put institutional laws and practices above the
138 needs of people, even as he stepped outside institutional policy and practice to heal on the
139 Sabbath.

140
141 This statement on institutional racism and racial justice is grounded in God’s admonition to see all
142 people as equal, created in God’s image, with a diversity of gifts to share. It is founded on the
143 biblical call to do justice. It is based in the model of Jesus who challenged attitudes of prejudice
144 and the institutional practices of discrimination of his day.

145
146 ***Call to Action***

147
148 As a council of Christian churches, we hold ourselves accountable for our own critical self-
149 reflection on the ways in which we knowingly or unknowingly perpetuate institutional racism. We
150 call ourselves to greater awareness of issues of power and privilege. We will strengthen our
151 advocacy efforts as we challenge policies and laws of the state that perpetuate structural
152 injustice.

153
154 We, the Wisconsin Council of Churches, commit to combat institutional racism as we:

- 155
156
- **Foster dialogue** and educational events to deepen understanding of racism at the individual, cultural, and institutional levels, including the church;
 - **Grow in partnership** with historical Black churches, immigrant churches, and those of other faith backgrounds to strengthen common efforts with an engaged shared leadership;
 - **Develop understanding** and resources that make clear the link between racism and poverty;
 - **Call to awareness** the hidden racism in laws and policies of the state;
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- **Call for public policy** and legislation that work to reduce racial disparities in all aspects of institutional life, including housing, insurance coverage, employment, transportation, education, health care, sentencing and incarceration, banking and loans, representation and voting;
- **Promote efforts** to implement fair and just policies on immigration;
- **Address policies** that affect Native American sovereignty and that provide access to services and opportunities for Native Americans on reservations;
- **Expose and work against policies** that profile people of color or of a particular faith;
- **Hold ourselves accountable** as a body to do our part in fulfilling the aims of this statement, reporting each year to the annual meeting.

Notes

1. Richard Dyer, "The Matter of Whiteness," in *White Privilege: Essential Readings on the Other Side of Racism*, ed. Paula S. Rothenberg (New York: Worth Publishers, 2002), 10-11.
2. Karen Brodtkin, "How Jews Became White Folks," in *White Privilege: Essential Readings on the Other Side of Racism*, ed. Paula S. Rothenberg (New York: Worth Publishers, 2002), 43.
3. George Lipsitz, "The Possessive Investment in Whiteness," in *White Privilege: Essential Readings on the Other Side of Racism*, ed. Paula S. Rothenberg (New York: Worth Publishers, 2002), 64.
4. Ibid., 65.
5. Ibid., 74.
6. *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, "The Wealth Gap Widens," August 14, 2011, sec. J.
7. Lipsitz, "Possessive Investment," 71.
8. Mark Griffin and Theron Walker, *Living on the Borders: What the Church Can Learn from Ethnic Immigrant Cultures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2004), 18

1 **Breaking the Cycle of Violence: Living As Images of God**

2
3 Wisconsin Council of Churches Statement Adopted February 6, 1995

4
5 Although the violence so prevalent all around us today frightens, angers, and outrages us, we
6 oppose the reintroduction of the death penalty in Wisconsin. We believe there are more humane
7 and effective options for addressing the problem of violence, and that these options enjoy
8 significant public support. *

9
10 Our opposition to the death penalty is based, first of all, on our faith.

11
12 We believe and teach that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God, and
13 that even the most perverse behavior cannot obliterate that image or destroy the worth of the
14 person who bears it.

15
16 We believe that God is love and that, through the prophets, Jesus and other messengers, even to
17 our own time, God teaches us to love and respect every human person as an image of God.

18
19 We understand ourselves as people called to follow Jesus, who rejected the law of retribution
20 ("an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth") and, by teaching us to love our enemies, broke the
21 cycle of violence and death once and for all. Our opposition to the death penalty is an expression
22 of our desire, as Jesus' disciples, to do what we can to bring this cycle to an end.

23
24 We believe that vengeance belongs to God alone, and that the God we adore is not vengeful but
25 gracious and merciful.

26
27 We also oppose the death penalty because of serious and unavoidable problems in its
28 implementation.

29
30 The record shows that innocent people have sometimes been executed. Because of human
31 imperfection, such mistakes are unavoidable. Unlike other forms of punishment, a mistaken
32 execution can never be corrected. **

33
34 Numerous studies have failed to prove that capital punishment deters homicide more effectively
35 than imprisonment. ***

36
37 Demographic studies have shown that the death penalty is imposed disproportionately on poor
38 people and people of color. ****

39
40 We know that there are many thoughtful differences of opinion about the death penalty among
41 the members of our churches. In the coming months, we urge the people in our congregations to
42 share these opinions with one another and to study and reflect together on this issue from the
43 perspective of their Christian faith, opening their hearts and minds to one another and to the
44 guidance and illumination of God's Spirit. We also urge those who come to a decision on this
45 issue to communicate their position to the governor and legislators of our state.

46 47 48 Footnotes

49 * A national poll conducted in 1993 by the polling firms of Greenberg/Lake and the Tarrance
50 Group revealed that more Americans favor life without parole, coupled with restitution, than favor
51 the death penalty. (Sentencing for Life, Americans Embrace Alternative to the Death Penalty,
52 1993).

53 ** A 1987 Stanford Law Review article found 349 people wrongfully convicted of crimes
54 punishable by death from 1900 to 1985. Of these, 139 received the death penalty and 23 were
55 executed.

56 *** For example, a study by Amnesty International revealed that between 1976 and 1986 the
57 average murder rate in states without the death penalty was 5.3 per million and in states that had
58 executed someone, it was 10.6 per million. (The Milwaukee Journal, October 29, 1994).

59 **** For example, nearly 90% of these executed for the crime of rape since 1930 have been
60 African Americans. (U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Capital Punishment,
61 1981).

1 **Gambling Statement**

2 The Wisconsin Council of Churches is unalterably opposed to any governmental sponsoring of
3 organized gambling in any form, whether by Federal, State, Tribal or County governments.
4 Organized gambling is a burden to society.

5 At the same time, the Wisconsin Council of Churches totally supports the principle of Tribal
6 Sovereignty. The government of the State of Wisconsin has no right to interfere in the internal
7 decisions of tribal governments, any more than it does in the decisions of other States.

8 The State does have an obligation to cooperate with tribal governments in order to address the
9 issues which compel those governments to look to gambling to provide an economic base for
10 their citizens.

11 Wisconsin Council of Churches Board of Directors Statement-December 2, 1997
12

1 **Loving our Neighbors**

2 **A Statement of the Wisconsin Council of Churches on Interfaith Relations**

3 4 **Introduction**

5
6 “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your
7 mind.’ This *is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your*
8 *neighbor as yourself.’*” (cf. Mt 22:34-40, NRSV)
9

10 Wisconsin has been a place of religious diversity from the time of the indigenous peoples to the
11 present. For much of their history, the residents of Wisconsin have represented the diverse
12 traditions within the Christian faith, yet only a small portion of the non-Christian religions of the
13 world. We now face a different social situation represented in terms such as post-modern and
14 post-Christendom. The size and diversity of our religious minorities are increasing and people of
15 faiths previously unknown to Wisconsin have become our neighbors. Interfaith dialogue and
16 understanding have become more important to our common civil discourse than ever before.
17 Attitudes toward other religions that are uninformed and disengaged are simply inadequate to our
18 setting. As followers of Jesus Christ, how do we engage with people of other faiths? How do we
19 proclaim the Gospel in a multi-religious setting while being sensitive to the spiritual traditions of
20 others? What truth can we say in love to them, and what truth can they say in love to us? A first
21 step is to examine the setting in which we live.
22

23 **Wisconsin’s Interfaith Context**

24
25 While Wisconsin remains predominantly Christian—two-thirds of religious adherents in the state
26 self-identify as either Roman Catholic or Lutheran—there is a growing presence of other religious
27 traditions. Jews and Muslims are the largest religious groups outside of the Christian community.
28 The major branches of Judaism have congregations and social service agencies in both
29 metropolitan Milwaukee and Madison along with smaller synagogues in other medium sized cities
30 around the state. Muslims also have a large congregational presence in Madison and Milwaukee,
31 with smaller Islamic Centers in Marshfield, the Fox Valley and Sheboygan. Both Madison and
32 Milwaukee metropolitan areas include Unitarian, Buddhist, Hindu, Jain, Pagan, and Sikh
33 communities as well. Native peoples with their distinctive spiritualities--including the Potawatomi,
34 Ho Chunk, Ojibwa and Menominee tribes--are located throughout the state.
35

36 There are a number of interfaith initiatives in Wisconsin. The largest is the Interfaith Conference
37 of Greater Milwaukee, which includes a variety of Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Mormon
38 and Unitarian communities. Local interfaith organizations that focus on cooperative social service
39 ventures and/or advocacy include Madison area Urban Ministry, Waukesha Interfaith Council,
40 Racine Interfaith Center, WISDOM and several others. The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of
41 Milwaukee has led the way in our state to create bilateral interfaith conversations, including
42 Catholic-Jewish dialogue and Catholic-Muslim dialogue. Finally, the Lubar Institute for the Study
43 of the Abrahamic Religions at U.W. Madison brings world renowned scholars to Wisconsin in
44 support of greater interfaith awareness and understanding.
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46 **Biblical and Theological Foundations: Love of God and Love of Neighbor**

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From the outset it must be understood that, for Christians, the goal of interfaith relationships is different from ecumenical relationships. Ecumenical relationships are established in the hope of fostering Christian unity; interfaith relationships are entered into primarily for the purpose of living in community. Christians enter into dialogue with one another so that we can cherish our common bond in Christ; Christians enter into interfaith dialogue so that we might be good neighbors with everyone. Ecumenical relationships, therefore, are rooted in the second article of the Nicene Creed,^v a common confession of Christ as God and Savior and the Trinitarian faith that binds Christians together:

[We believe] ...in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made...

For Christians, Interfaith relationships are rooted in the first article of the Nicene Creed, a common experience of our humanity and the struggles of daily life that binds humanity together:

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

Although both interfaith and ecumenical relationships have dialogue as their basic activity, respect as their basic approach and mutual understanding as their basic hope, nevertheless, as noted above, the expectations of these relationships are quite different.

The biblical and theological foundation for this distinction in relationships is expressed in the two love commandments that Jesus presented as a summary of “all the law and the prophets.” Loosely quoted, the commandments are: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind... and love your neighbor as yourself” (cf. Mt 22:34-40, NRSV). It is helpful to focus on this text because of the favorable image it already has in interfaith dialogue. For example, in Christian-Muslim relationships, it is the primary text Islamic scholars used in their historic invitation to Christians to dialogue (“A Common Word between Us and You” - See Resources below). For our purposes, the text is important for the way it holds in tension two distinct but foundational principles central to interfaith relationships: freedom of conscience before God and unreserved respect of other persons.

What is striking about the first commandment concerning the love of God is its unconditional nature. But, here, care in interpretation must be taken. As the word of Christ, the commandment is not a demand that is being imposed on us, but an invitation that is being offered to us. The commandment teaches us about who God is. God is the One who can be loved absolutely, relied upon without reserve, and trusted with our whole being, sinful though we are. This God is the God revealed in Jesus Christ, who comes to a sinful, broken world not with new demands and accusations but with grace and mercy, carrying human sin and brokenness in his own body on the cross and conquering human sin and brokenness in his resurrection extending new life to all the world. The commandment is an invitation to love this God, teaching us, paradoxically, that the same God, who, through the law, condemns the world of sin, is the same God who, through the promises expressed by the prophets, redeems the world through Christ.

92 But the commandment also teaches that the act of loving this magnanimous God is a free act of
93 conscience, a fruit of faith, a gift of the Holy Spirit. Any use of coercion – whether of a physical,
94 social or psychological nature – to promote the love of God contradicts the commandment, the
95 Christian understanding of God, and the nature of faith. Therefore, respect for religious freedom
96 and the conscience or faith of others in religious matters is a foundational principle of Jesus’
97 teaching on the love of God. While it is certainly appropriate for Christians to dialogue with others
98 about the love of God in Christ and to invite them into that love as circumstances would have it, it
99 is an offense to the love of God to present it as a demand or to inject a coercive element into it.
100 This kind of admonition to respect religious freedom occurs in various denominational statements
101 on interfaith relations, ranging from the Vatican II document, *Nostra Aetate* (1965) to the
102 American Baptist document, *American Baptist Resolution on Interreligious Prejudice* (2003).

103 What is striking about the second commandment concerning the love of neighbor is the
104 unreserved respect, indeed, the complete identification it calls forth between Christians and their
105 neighbors. Again, care must be taken in the interpretation of the text. Who is the neighbor? A
106 neighbor is someone who is related to us by virtue of our placement in the world, not by virtue of
107 our relationship to Christ. The relationship called “neighbor” is defined by the first article of the
108 Nicene Creed, the doctrine of Creation, not the second article, the doctrine of Christ^{vi}. How are
109 we as Christians to regard our neighbors? Answer: as ourselves, as fellow human beings
110 created in the image of God and as co-stewards of God’s creation, called to work together for the
111 common good. Therefore, when the commandment urges us to love our neighbor as ourselves, it
112 is urging us, above all, to work together with all people for the common good: my good, my
113 neighbor’s good, and the good of the whole creation.

114 To be sure, neighbors can certainly disagree on how they understand the common good. The
115 commandment does not forbid such disagreement. Rather, what the commandment does is urge
116 love, even in disagreement: love understood as unreserved respect for the other, even in
117 disagreement, love understood as an exercise in civility in all things, even in disagreement. In
118 addition, neither does the commandment forbid compromise in how we uphold the common good.
119 It is certainly a basic part of civility and respect of others to make compromises with our
120 neighbors. But compromise by its very nature must be a free choice, and made with a good
121 conscience. Therefore, only those of equal standing in open dialogue are in a position to make
122 compromise with integrity. For this reason, the commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves
123 presupposes a community of equals engaged in open dialogue. The commandment to love our
124 neighbor as ourselves informs all aspects of human life together. In today’s religiously diverse
125 society, where religious disagreement is a given, unreserved respect for those of different
126 religious traditions also needs to be a given. Treating neighbors who have differing religious
127 outlooks as equal partners in a common human calling to promote the common good is a basic
128 principle for governing interfaith relationships that is not only consistent with, but also
129 commensurate with Christian belief.

130 From this reading of the love commandments, two basic principles emerge for understanding the
131 relationship of the Christian Churches in the WCC to other religious traditions: freedom of religion
132 and unreserved respect for the other as neighbor and equal. Working out the practical details of
133 these principles can happen only in the context of respectful dialogue. Such dialogue takes place
134 on many levels, from formal theological and scholarly dialogues at the institutional level to
135 informal dialogues between neighbors at the local level. What follows are some guidelines for
136 dialogue at the local level.

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Dialogical Virtues

The reality of creating a space for respectful dialogue does not always come easily. We must first begin with relationship. To come to a greater understanding of the faith of our neighbors, we must know our neighbors. Therefore, the opening to dialogue is fellowship. The building of relationship can take different forms; most common are those of serving together and eating together. When Jesus encountered a stranger he often responded by sitting down to a meal to build relationship in the sharing of food. We too can follow this example in shared table and fellowship. In serving together, we can build relationships around the work required to meet an identified need in our shared community.

When we establish relationships of friendship with our neighbors we open a door to further conversation. This open door is often ignored as we seek to serve our communities and build upon our friendships. In order for true respectful dialogue to be achieved we must be willing to enter into a deeper relationship. This requires three primary virtues from all participants: humble listening, prophetic witness, and compassionate collaboration.^{vii}

The first of these virtues is humble listening: true dialogue requires that we listen. And to listen well requires humility. Humility calls us to focus on others as they share their own faith experiences and to listen attentively, seeking to set aside previous misconceptions or prejudices about their traditions. Humility reminds us also that we do not know all of God's revelations. While we may understand the truth of our own Christian beliefs, we cannot assume that we fully understand the actions of God, or the ways in which other people of faith may experience the divine. In humble listening we are ready to be surprised.

The second of these virtues is prophetic witness: true dialogue requires that we hear the truth of the other and that we share our understanding of the truth. As Christians, we are called by Christ to go out and share the Gospel. It does nothing for dialogue to sit and listen and not take the opportunity also to share our own experiences of God and the hope we know through Christ. Yet, there are two cautions to this virtue. Sharing our experience of God's love is not the same as seeking to convert our neighbor to a shared belief. Dialogue is not a space for conversion, but a space for witness. The second caution is that in informal dialogue we are not necessarily called to speak for our full tradition, denomination, or even congregation, but only for ourselves. While fairness to our partners and our own traditions require that we be well-grounded in our faith, too often Christians feel that we are not qualified to speak if we do not know proper theological terms or Biblical references. Informal dialogue provides the opportunity to share our own witness and personal experience and builds toward deeper understanding.

The third of these virtues is compassionate collaboration: true dialogue requires that we act on a foundation of mutual understanding, respecting the beliefs of all participants. Coming together to listen and to share often leads to a strengthened call for collaboration as people of faith seek to respond to the suffering in our world. This differs from the initial attempts of service projects that may build fellowship. By drawing on our common understanding of one another we are able to act in a manner that encourages full collaboration and builds solidarity.

Invitation to Action

The Wisconsin Council of Churches invites its member churches to take the following steps:

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(1) To give high priority to better understanding and appreciating both our own and other religious traditions in our state, with the goal of fostering deeper interfaith relationships by creating safe spaces for dialogue, that we might learn from one another and deepen our own faith commitments;

(2) To examine and uproot all that might contribute to prejudice in our teaching, life and ministries; including both disrespect toward Christians and Christian disrespect of others;

(3) To be compassionate neighbors, bearing witness to the love and justice of Jesus Christ when those of other faith traditions experience prejudice;

(4) To encourage dialogue with Americans of other religions to promote peace and justice in the U.S. and around the world; and in particular with American Jews and Muslims as integral to the church's efforts for peace in the Middle East; encourage interreligious dialogue in other situations in which religion is identified as a factor in conflict situations;

(5) To condemn all forms of intolerance which turn religious differences into excuses for defamations, stereotyping, and violence; to defend their victims; to challenge and rebut statements about other faith groups or individuals that embody religious stereotyping, prejudice and bigotry;

(6) To uphold religious freedom for all persons, defending the rights and liberties of cultural, racial and religious minorities in the same manner that we defend our own;

(7) To support ongoing work with related organizations and people of other religions in public policy advocacy and to initiate work in other program areas of common concern.

Resources for Further Study

Foundational Documents

Nostra Aetate: Declaration of the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions is a foundational theological document from the Roman Catholic Church that has informed Christian reflection on interfaith relationships since the 1960's.

http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html

A Common Word Between Us and You

Written as a letter from a group of Muslim scholars to the Christian community in 2009, "A Common Word" seeks to find common theological ground between Christians and Muslims. The website also includes Christian responses to it: <http://www.acommonword.com/>

A Time for Recommitment

The International Council of Christians and Jews published this text. The document has three sections: A Call to Christians and Christian Communities, A Call to Jews and Jewish Communities, and A Call to Both Christian and Jewish Communities and Others. You can find it online at <http://www.iccj.org/A-Time-for-Recommitment-The-Twelve-Points-of-Berlin.184.0.html>

234 *Dabru Emet – a Jewish response to changing attitudes of Christians toward Jews and Judaism*
235 A group of Jewish scholars sent out a letter in 2000 to Christians affirming dialogue and mutual
236 understanding in: [http://www.jcrelations.net/Dabru_Emet -](http://www.jcrelations.net/Dabru_Emet_-_A_Jewish_Statement_on_Christians_and_Christianity.2395.0.html)
237 [_A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity.2395.0.html](http://www.jcrelations.net/Dabru_Emet_-_A_Jewish_Statement_on_Christians_and_Christianity.2395.0.html)
238 A Sacred Obligation – A Christian Response to Dabru Emet:
239 http://www.bc.edu/dam/files/research_sites/cjl/sites/partners/csg/Sacred_Obligation.htm
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241 Ecumenical Resource Links
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243 National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA
244 Policy Statement “Interfaith Relations and the Churches”
245 <http://nationalcouncilofchurches.us/common-witness/1999/interfaith.php>
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247 World Council of Churches
248 Documents related to the WCC program on Interreligious dialogue and cooperation:
249 [http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation)
250 [dialogue-and-cooperation](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation)
251 WCC Study Document: “Christian Witness in a Multi-Faith World”
252 [http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/christian-identity-in-pluralistic-societies/christian-witness-in-a-multi-religious-world)
253 [dialogue-and-cooperation/christian-identity-in-pluralistic-societies/christian-witness-in-a-](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/christian-identity-in-pluralistic-societies/christian-witness-in-a-multi-religious-world)
254 [multi-religious-world](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/christian-identity-in-pluralistic-societies/christian-witness-in-a-multi-religious-world)
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256 Denominational Resource Links
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258 American Baptist Churches in the USA
259 Resolution in Interreligious Prejudice:
260 [http://www.abc-usa.org/resources/abcusa-resources/abcusa-documents/policy-statements-](http://www.abc-usa.org/resources/abcusa-resources/abcusa-documents/policy-statements-and-resolutions/)
261 [and-resolutions/](http://www.abc-usa.org/resources/abcusa-resources/abcusa-documents/policy-statements-and-resolutions/)
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263 Church of the Brethren
264 Resources for Interfaith Dialogue:
265 <http://www.brethren.org/search.html?q=Interreligious>
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267 Episcopal Church
268 Statement on interreligious relations "Towards our Mutual Flourishing"
269 <http://library.episcopalchurch.org/document/toward-our-mutual-flourishing>
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271 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
272 Downloadable Resources on Interreligious Relations:
273 <http://www.elca.org/Resources/Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations>
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275 Moravian Church
276 A compelling story of Moravian interfaith engagement:
277 [http://www.moravian.org/the-moravian-magazine/moravian-may-2012/a-moravian-and-](http://www.moravian.org/the-moravian-magazine/moravian-may-2012/a-moravian-and-muslim-answer-to-an-imam-s-request/)
278 [muslim-answer-to-an-imam-s-request/](http://www.moravian.org/the-moravian-magazine/moravian-may-2012/a-moravian-and-muslim-answer-to-an-imam-s-request/)
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280 Orthodox Traditions
281 A concise discussion of Orthodox views on interreligious relationships is contained in:

282 [Steps Towards A Reunited Church: A Sketch Of An Orthodox-Catholic Vision For The](#)
283 [Future](#) (October 2, 2010)
284 Website with all Orthodox papers on faith and order issues:
285 [Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation](#)
286
287 Presbyterian Church (USA)
288 Interreligious Stance of the Presbyterian Church (USA):
289 http://www.presbyterianmission.org/site_media/media/uploads/theologyandworship/interfaith/the_interreligious_stance_pc%28usa%291.pdf
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292 Reformed Church in America
293 Resources on Christian-Muslim dialogue and cooperation:
294 <https://www.rca.org/sslpage.aspx?pid=2656>
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296 Roman Catholic
297 From the US Catholic Conference:
298 <http://uscgb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/ecumenical-and-interreligious/interreligious/index.cfm>
299 Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue:
300 http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_pro_20051996_en.html
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302 Declaration on Human Dignity (*Dignitatis Humanae*, 1965)
303 http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat_ii_decl_19651207_dignitatis-humanae_en.html
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306 United Church of Christ
307 A study resource for interreligious relations in the United Church of Christ
308 https://www.google.com/url?q=http://www.ucc.org/education/polity/pdf-folder/a-study-resource-on-interreligious-relations-for-the-ucc-2005.pdf&sa=U&ei=LUgcVLOZMJS3yATR9oGQAQ&ved=0CAUQFjAA&client=internal-uds-cse&usq=AFQjCNGUonEusrsXpdu_3Y79maPygECedQ
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313 United Methodist Church
314 Called to Be Neighbors and Witnesses: Guidelines for Interreligious Relationships
315 <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/called-to-be-neighbors-and-witnesses-guidelines-for-interreligious-relation>
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^v The Nicene Creed (ICEL Text)

We believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,

true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,
and became man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father [and the Son],
who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.
We confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins
and we look forward to the resurrection of the dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

^{vi} see endnote i for full text of the Nicene Creed

^{vii} For a full description of these virtues, see Catherine Cornille, *The Im-Possibility of Interreligious Dialogue*, Crossroads, 2008.