

# Jubilee Workbook IV

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Ross and Gloria Kinsler, the authors of *The Biblical Jubilee and the Struggle for Life: An Invitation to Personal, Ecclesial, and Social Transformation*, continue to discover useful materials for understanding the global economy, biblical teachings about economics, and attempts to practice economic justice. The following worksheets are bite-sized summaries to facilitate individual and group reflection and action. Each worksheet, which can be photocopied for all participants, provides stimulus for discussion. The sheets are organized under three very general headings: **TODAY'S WORLD, BIBLICAL FAITH, and RESPONSIBLE DISCIPLESHIP**. Jubilee spirituality requires critical thinking in all three dimensions. These materials may be reproduced or published with credit to the authors, who are members of the **Sabbath Economics Collaborative: Educating and Animating for Jubilee Justice**.

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# TODAY'S WORLD

## 500 YEARS OF OPPRESSION, PATRIARCHY, AND RACISM

Howard Zinn's book, *A People's History of the United States: 1492-Present*, has given us a "rereading" of U.S. history "from the underside," i.e. from the perspective of Native Americans, poor white serfs, African Americans, women, workers, and worldwide victims of U.S. "Manifest Destiny." It should be required reading, if not in schools and universities, certainly in our churches, as a necessary part of our education and preparation for life in this terribly unjust world.

From the beginning of our history there have been, of course, various mechanisms by which powerful and wealthy elites have gained and maintained and augmented their privileges at the expense of those at the bottom of the social and economic pyramids. White craftsmen and poor whites were invited to make common use of their racial "superiority" in exploitation and abuse of Blacks and Indians. White men exploited and abused both White and non-White women because of their gender "superiority." Periodically, concessions and compromises were made with middle class and other "inferiors" so that the rebellious sectors could be quelled and the basic socio-economic pyramids could be kept relatively stable.

Zinn analyzes the peculiar nature of the exploitation and oppression of women, who have been largely absent from earlier histories of our country. Among African and Native Americans and among the poor, they have been doubly oppressed. And among all groups, they were for so long given tasks as "a convenience for men, who could use, exploit, and cherish someone who was at the same time servant, sex mate, companion, and bearer-teacher-warden of his children." (102) In the early years "women were imported as sex slaves, child-bearers, companions." (103) Many came as indentured servants. Servant and slave girls were commonly abused sexually. Black slave women were often separated from their husbands and even from their children. According to the dominant cultural and religious ideology, women were expected to be subject to their husbands, to be occupied in the home and not in public affairs, to turn over their property to their husbands, and to be sexually pure, but the vicissitudes of life in the colonies and on the frontier often forced them to assume responsibilities on a par with men.

The struggle of Native North Americans is perhaps the most tragic of all. From the time of the original colonies, through the great White migrations across the Appalachian Mountains, on to the Rockies, and finally to the West Coast, the great Indian Nations have had their lands taken, their villages burned, their women raped, their cultures and religions vilified, their right to life denied. Their story is replete with official deceit and betrayal, massacres and forced removals, and endless treaties leading to genocide. It can be argued that the wars and skirmishes against the Native Peoples played a decisive role in the formation of the heroic, military, chauvinistic American mind that in the 20th Century has wrecked havoc on Third World peoples around the world through military intervention, secret operations, and economic imperialism.

The human cost of the slave system will forever be incalculable and incomprehensible, especially to Whites. The heritage of slavery in the U.S. psyche, both Black and White, may never be fully exorcised. By 1860 there were 4 million slaves in the South, producing enormous profits for their White owners, and there were 200,000 free Blacks in the North. The fruits of this iniquitous system are still being borne by the women, children, and men of Harlem, South Chicago, and South Central Los Angeles and also among the still largely White suburbs of all our cities, among rich and poor of both races whose humanity will be fundamentally deformed as long as this racism, sometimes referred to as America's original sin, persists.

**Consider what U.S. history might have been like if the Jubilee vision and mandates had – as some Native peoples, settlers, and freed slaves proposed – prevailed.**

## BRITISH AND AMERICAN ATTEMPTS AT JUBILEE

“Jubilating; or, How the Atlantic Working Class Used the Biblical Jubilee Against Capitalism, with Some Success” (Peter Linebaugh in *The New Enclosures*, 84-98) begins with a summary of the biblical jubilee teachings and then explores various attempts by workers, farmers, slaves, and reform movements on both sides of the Atlantic to sing and to apply that vision in their struggles for survival against capitalism over the last 200 years. Understandably, oppressed and impoverished people were largely the ones who found meaning and hope in the jubilee themes of good news to the poor, release to the captives, liberation for the oppressed, and redistribution of the land.

The perceived threat of this message to the structures of power and privilege in the New World, above all slavery, led to the silencing of such preaching and singing, the forbidding of prayer meetings at night, and sometimes hangings. “Yet still African-American Christianity remained a religion of action—shouting, dancing, singing, weeping, jerking, speaking in tongues. The Sabbath and the jubilee remained its theological essence.”(88) Jamaican Robert Wedderburn, an influential pamphleteer, learned about jubilee from Englishman Thomas Spence, and Spence, outstanding leader in the struggle for the common lands, learned about slavery from Wedderburn. In 1800 Denmark Vesey, born in the Virgin Islands, won the lottery, bought his freedom, and became a leader in the free Black community and in the Methodist Church in the USA. In 1854 William Goodell began publishing *The American Jubilee*, which called for the abolition of slavery.

“The original accumulation of capital in England was the result of the enclosure of land and imperial trade and conquest. The former turns common lands into private property by the erection of fences or hedges. . . . Imperialism plunders peoples of other countries and turns them into wage-slaves or slave-slaves.” Linebaugh calls this “a period of massive theft: between 1801 and 1831 3,511,770 acres of common land were stolen from the agricultural population.”(92) Poor families lost access to grazing land, gleanings from open fields, their cottages, animals, fuel, and hunting grounds. Thomas Spence wrote and spoke against the enclosures, proposed the abolition of private property, and called for the parishes to take back their rights on an appointed day he called jubilee. He opposed the oppression of “the lordly overclass,” high taxes, inflation, and imperialism. His “agrarian communism . . . included all capital—the mines, the pit-heads, the canals, the ships, the machines.”(89)

“By the third decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century jubilee was present on both sides of the Atlantic, an idea and a practice common to workers of both the cotton plantation and the cotton factory. It possessed both prophetic leaders and an insurrectionary experience. In the decades to follow . . . the jubilee tradition grew. In America it concentrated on slavery and found victory in the Civil War. In England it concentrated on land and found power among the Chartists,” who “called for land nationalization.”(95)

Linebaugh summarizes his historical review with these words:

*Jubilee expressed liberation against imperialism in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. It opposed slavery, landlordship, credit-and-debt, the work ethic, pollution of the earth, and it advised revolution every fifty years. For several thousand years its meaning was distorted or ignored. With the advent of industrial capitalism the enclosed working class of England and the enslaved African-American working class rediscovered jubilee. They adopted jubilee to freedom and anti-capitalism; they expanded its meaning and gave it bite. (97)*

**How could the jubilee vision be expanded and applied in the 21st Century?**

## DIMENSIONS OF GLOBAL POVERTY

Following are critical aspects of world poverty, which call for understanding, analysis, and work for change. They are inter-related, so all of them must be dealt with in the struggle to end poverty. These comments are drawn from various UN programs.

### 1. GEOGRAPHY

The largest percentage of people living under \$1 per day (extreme poverty) live in Africa.

Two-thirds of the 35 million housing units needed annually for families moving to urban areas are needed in the Asia/Pacific region. The majority of the one-room shelters are in the southern hemisphere.

### 2. INCOME

Half the world's population lives on less than \$2 a day. One sixth live on \$1 a day. The gap between the richest and poorest is growing in most societies.

Poverty is not just a question of income. It includes insecurity, inequality, poor health, and illiteracy.

### 3. HEALTH

Poor health makes people poor, and being poor makes people sick. Illness affects wages and is a major cause for falling into poverty. It can push poor families into destitution.

Poor people are more often sick than the non-poor. They are more often exposed to diseases, unsafe working conditions, substandard housing, and lack of health care.

### 4. GENDER

Women comprise half the world's population, but they hold only about 1% of the world's wealth. All around the world women face economic and social discrimination.

One fourth of the developing countries prevent women from owning land or taking mortgages in their own name, especially in Africa, western Asia, and Latin America.

### 5. WATER AND SANITATION

2.4 billion people lack adequate sanitation. 1.1 billion have no clean water.

This increases health risks, leading to the death of 2.2 million people - many of them children - annually.

**Consider what life in these circumstances would be like for you and your family.**

## WHY UNIONS MATTER

*As an organization committed to worker justice, the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice believes that all workers should have the right to form a union without fear and harassment. In addition, the organization believes that in general unions are good for society. This does not mean that every union is perfect nor that every workplace needs a union. But for those concerned about justice for workers, it is important to understand why many workers want to join unions, the union benefit for workers, the role of unions in the society, and the difficulties workers face in forming unions. And, it is important to build relationships with labor unions to jointly fight for shared values of justice and dignity for workers, and to uphold the rights of workers who choose to form unions. (1)*

This title and this quotation are taken from a pamphlet of the NICWJ ([nicwj@igc.org](mailto:nicwj@igc.org)), which is based in Chicago and which pursues the concerns herein expressed. It explains why workers join or organize unions, what benefits unions offer workers, difficulties workers face when they choose to form unions, and concerns about union corruption, violence, racism and sexism. For people of faith, particularly those deeply concerned about economic justice, unions matter, or should matter, a great deal.

Workers join or organize unions for various reasons: They need a collective voice in decisions that affect their work and their lives; they want a safe working environment; they want and need living wages; they want comprehensive benefits for healthcare, paid vacations and holidays, secure pensions; they want at least some job security; and they want fairness in the workplace. Too often employers, corporations and investors are so concerned about the bottom line that they do not give much if any importance to their workers' concerns. Unions enable workers to have a voice, to secure better wages and benefits, to have health insurance and retirement benefits. Furthermore, unions play an important role for justice and stability in the wider society through public policy advocacy, raising wages for all workers, not just union members, and limiting the excessive disparity of wages between workers and managers, especially CEOs.

*Unfortunately, US workers face a very hostile climate for organizing unions. Workers who choose to organize for a collective voice on the job are often viewed as disloyal troublemakers. . . . In a recent survey, 44 percent of all working Americans who are not currently represented by unions would vote to join a union if they had the opportunity to do so without risking their jobs. Workers are afraid. This hostile environment toward unions is created both by weak labor protections in the law, and by an aggressive union-busting industry. No industrialized nation has weaker laws, nor such a vibrant union-busting industry. . . . The weak laws alone would be bad enough for workers who choose to organize. But a sophisticated, \$500-million-a-year industry has developed to consult and advise employers on how to oppose unions. Over 80 percent of companies faced with union organizing efforts wage anti-union campaigns. . . . Over 10,000 workers are illegally fired each year for exercising their "right to organize." Half of private sector employers threaten to eliminate all the workers' jobs if they join together in a union. (6)*

Much media attention has been given to union corruption, more than has been given to unions' work for justice or to corporate corruption and injustice. Workers have engaged in violence, when their jobs moved overseas or their livelihood has been threatened, but labor leaders abhor violence and preach nonviolence, even when the companies commit economic violence against their own workers. Unions have been guilty of racism and sexism, along with the rest of US society, but diversity is increasing.

- 1. How do workers' rights and economic justice today relate to Sabbath economics?**
- 2. What is your local church or national denomination doing about justice for workers?**

## **PREDATORY LENDING AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE**

Robyn Smith, a California Deputy Attorney General, has much experience with the mechanisms by which corporate America exploits the poor. The following notes are taken from a presentation she made on June 23, 2002 at All Saints Episcopal Church in Pasadena. They represent her personal views and are not in any way official.

What is economic justice? At its most basic level, economic justice means bringing all humans far enough out of poverty such that we can all focus on becoming fully alive to who we are and what we are meant to be - not to focus on survival, getting food on the table, paying the rent, etc. To achieve economic justice, there are two sides of the equation that must be addressed. Usually we focus on income: wages, public benefits, health benefits, pensions, etc. But all of this is meaningless if we do not also focus on the other side of the equation, which is income outgo. Even if you achieve living wages, it doesn't bring a family out of poverty if all of it is going to service debt. . .paying for the essentials (rent or mortgage payments, food, utilities, transportation, child care, medical) and also paying for credit.

The poor in this country - the working poor and others surviving on disability, TANF, food stamps and other types of public benefits - are now in crisis not only because of their low incomes but because of the high debt load they are carrying. Bankruptcies are at an all time high. Smith points to three main causes for this crisis, which has been "created by corporate greed, power and profit": We live in a materialistic culture ("You are what you own"); we are bombarded with the message of "instant gratification" (Why wait? You can have it now!); and there has been an erosion of consumer protections.

Predatory lending exploits the vulnerability of the poor. Higher interest rates may be charged to cover increased risk. Mortgage companies may charge high variable interest and high origination fees. Unsecured credit card debts may be consolidated with home loans and lead to loss of the home. Borrowers may be encouraged to take out additional loans beyond their capacity to make the payments. Credit payments may exceed a person's monthly income. Elderly people with a lot of equity in their homes may be targeted. Foreclosures in low-income neighborhoods may contribute to urban blight and housing crises. People without bank accounts, such as sweatshop workers, may cash their paychecks at special outlets or mobile trucks for excess charges. Paychecks may be cashed in advance as two-week loans at 460% APR. Tax preparers may charge high fees plus additional loan fees for advanced tax refunds. African Americans may be charged higher rates than white counterparts with the same credit rating. Credit card companies may focus on the poor and middle class. In fact such practices now amount to a "billion dollar industry involving publicly traded corporations."

**Old Testament laws prohibited usury and offered relief from debt, loss of land, and slavery through Sabbath Year mandates (Deuteronomy 15). What are the churches doing today regarding predatory lending? What might they do to help their own members . . . and others?**

# BIBLICAL FAITH

## SABBATH REST

*Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. . . .For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and consecrated it. (Ex. 20:8-11)*

*Observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy. . . .Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day. (Deut. 5:12-15)*

In his critical study, *Sabbath and Jubilee* (Chalice Press, 2000), Richard Lowery writes (106): “The Sabbath law occupies a pivotal position in both versions of the Decalogue (Ten Commandments), standing at the crux of theology and ethics. The verses before the Sabbath law address Israel’s relationship with God, and the laws that follow regulate social relationships within and between households. Sabbath grounds all those relationships in the identity of God as creator of the world and liberator of Israel.” The seventh day is to be kept holy by rest to protect and restore the life of all the household, from sons and daughters to male and female slaves, all the animals, and resident aliens. This mandate is so serious that its violation could, according to Ex. 35:2-3, merit the death penalty.

Tragically, Israel itself reduced the Sabbath mandate to ritualistic legalism to be used not for the poor, not for justice, but the contrary.

*Here this, you that trample on the needy, and bring to ruin the poor of the land, saying, “When will the new moon be over so that we may sell grain; and the Sabbath, so that we may offer wheat for sale? We will make the ephah small and the shekel great, and practice deceit with false balances, buying the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, and selling the sweepings of the wheat.” (Am. 8:4-6)*

Lowery summarizes his exposition of “Sabbath and Household Hospitality”: “Sabbath justice begins in the household in just relationships between male and female, old and young, subordinates and ‘bosses.’ Sabbath rest is, above all, relief for the household’s most vulnerable members. The household ethic at the root of Sabbath is the foundation of a broader social-economic ethic expressed in prophetic condemnations of the royal political economy, such as those found in Amos. This prophetic critique makes clear that Sabbath has a distinctively economic dimension. It is a matter of justice, not simply a pious holiday. In fact, the failure to attend to the needs of the vulnerable negates the value of ‘technical’ observances of Sabbath-day rest. Sabbath without justice is blasphemy.” (121)

**1. How did Jesus deal with Sabbath rules and practices?**

**2. How are we to carry out the intensions of the Sabbath day mandate?**

## JESUS' JUBILEE PRAYER

*Our Father in heaven,  
Hallowed be your name,  
Your kingdom come,  
Your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.*

*Give us this day our daily bread,  
And forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors,  
And do not bring us to the time of trial,  
but rescue us from evil.*

According to Matthew 6:9-13 (NRSV), Jesus taught his disciples to pray in this way. Therefore we too pray this way. But what do these six petitions mean? Is it possible that we have used this prayer thousands of times without realizing its true meaning? We shall now try to re-read the text in light of its foundation in the Hebrew Scriptures, because Jesus was a Jew and frequently based his teachings and actions on these Scriptures. In particular we will look for ties between this prayer and the Sabbath Day, the Sabbath Year, and the Jubilee mandates. This has, in fact, been called a Jubilee prayer because of these ties.

- 1. The first three petitions seem to look upward, to God in heaven. But it would be redundant to pray that way because God's name is already sanctified in heaven, God's Reign is already a reality in heaven, God's will is already done in heaven. The problem is here *on Earth*. How can God's name be sanctified on Earth? How can God's Reign come on Earth? How can God's will be done on Earth? Give examples in response to these questions.**
- 2. The other three petitions clearly refer to the behavior of Jesus' followers, that is, how we should live in order to sanctify God's name, realize God's reign, and do God's will on Earth. As we examine these petitions, it is very important to note that they are expressed in plural. When we ask for *our* daily bread, whom should we include - just our families, the members of our faith communities, all Christians, or all human beings, especially the most needy? When we think about our daily bread, how much should we ask for - according to the lesson of the manna in Exodus 16? What do we need to do so that all will have their daily bread?**
- 3. When we ask for forgiveness or cancellation of our debts, here too we have to ask ourselves, whom should we include - just our families or all who are exploited, marginalized, and impoverished by the mechanisms of debt, high interest rates, and corporate commerce that oppresses workers and excludes the poor? How are we to fulfill this petition, in keeping with the Sabbath Year teaching in Deuteronomy 15?**
- 4. Finally, when we think about the temptations of and addictions to the current system of consumption and accumulation, how are we to fulfill the last petition and be freed from this evil, as expressed in the Jubilee Year, Leviticus 25?**

## NEHEMIAH AND THE DEBT SYSTEM

### *A scandal among the Jews (Nehemiah 5:1-5)*

*Now there was a great outcry of the people and of their wives against their Jewish kin. For there were those who said, "With our sons and our daughters, we are many; we must get grain, so that we may eat and stay alive." There were also those who said, "We are having to pledge our fields, our vineyards, and our houses in order to get grain during the famine." And there were those who said, "We are having to borrow money on our fields and vineyards to pay the king's tax. Now our flesh is the same as that of our kindred; our children are the same as their children; and yet we are slaves, and some of our daughters have been ravished; we are powerless, and our fields and vineyards now belong to others."*

### *Governor Nehemiah's response (Nehemiah 5:6-13)*

*I was very angry when I heard their outcry and these complaints. After thinking it over, I brought charges against the nobles and the officials; I said to them, "You are all taking interest from your own people." And I called a great assembly to deal with them, and said to them, As far as we were able, we have bought back our Jewish kindred who had been sold to other nations; but now you are selling your own kin, who must then be bought back by us!" They were silent, and could not find a word to say. So I said, "The thing that you are doing is not good. Should you not walk in the fear of our God, to prevent the taunts of the nations our enemies? Moreover I and my brothers and my servants are lending them money and grain. Let us stop this taking of interest. Restore to them, this very day, their fields, their vineyards, their olive orchards, and their houses, and the interest on money, grain, wine, and oil that you have been exacting from them." Then they said, "We will restore everything and demand nothing more from them. We will do as you say." And I called the priests, and made them take an oath to do as they had promised. I also shook out the fold of my garment and said, "So may God shake out everyone from house and from property who does not perform this promise. Thus may they be shaken out and emptied." And all the assembly said, "Amen," and praised the Lord. And the people did as they had promised.*

**1. This passage, which tells a classic story of the debt system when Judah was part of the Persian Empire, explains how even among God's people the rich became richer and the poor lost everything. We know, of course, that interest was prohibited (Deut. 23:20-21, Lev. 25:36-37), and the Sabbath/Jubilee mandates provided for the cancellation of debts and liberation of slaves (Deut. 15:1-18, Lev. 25:25-55). What was God's clear intention for God's people?**

**2. Much has been said about today's debt system, especially the debts of poor countries, which are falling deeper into poverty and dependence and oppression while the rich countries are becoming more and more wealthy. What is God's clear intention today regarding poverty and the debt system in the U.S. and globally?**

## PENTECOST AND JUBILEE

*Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.*

Acts 2:43-47

- 1. Underline the phrase, “day by day,” and explain its relation to the manna story in Exodus 16, which introduces the Sabbath Day.**
- 2. Explain its relation to the phrase, “Give us this day our daily bread” in the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13.**

*Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.*

Acts 4:32-35

- 1. Underline the phrase, “There was not a needy person among them,” and explain its relation to Deuteronomy 15, which concerns the Sabbath Year.**
- 2. Explain its relation to the petition, “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,” in the Lord’s Prayer.**

Clearly the experience of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was foundational for the early church and the whole Book of Acts. Luke, who wrote Acts, begins his Gospel narrative of Jesus’ ministry with the story of Jesus at the synagogue of Nazareth, Luke 4:16-30, which is foundational for the whole Gospel. It presents Jesus’ reading from Isaiah 61: 1-2a as his definition of his ministry, ending with the words, “to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor,” which apparently refers to the Year of Jubilee in Leviticus 25.

- 1. Read Leviticus 25:8-12 and explain the relation between the Jubilee and Jesus’ ministry and the experience of Pentecost in the above texts from Acts.**
- 2. Explore the meaning of Jubilee for our churches. How has it been understood and practiced? How should it be understood and practiced? What is its relation to the words, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,” from the Lord’s Prayer?**

## RICH AND POOR IN THE LETTER OF JAMES

René Krüger has written in German a thesis on *Rich and Poor in the Letter of James: A Latin American Reading—The Challenge of Prophetic Christianity*. The following quotations are taken from his brief summary in Spanish. His research is based on rigorous exegesis of six texts that deal with this theme:

*In 1:9-11 James announces the total inversion of relations. . . for James the rich do not belong to the congregation.*

*In 1:27 he defines true religion or relationship to God not in ritualistic terms but in terms of action through service in solidarity. At the same time he underlines the peculiar New Testament incorporation of the Old Testament concern for orphans and widows.*

*In 2:1-13 he elaborates the strict rejection of partiality expressed as favoritism. . . because this attitude is contrary to God's revelation and because it is a mechanism that under girds the class system and destroys the community.*

*In 2:14-17, within the larger unit 2:14-26, he examines the central thoughts concerning faith that is carried out in solitary actions. . . not a dogmatic exposition of. . . justification but a serious exhortation addressed to those members of the congregation that do not help their needy sisters and brothers and that use as an excuse the slogan that faith justifies without works.*

*In 4:13-17 he unmasks megalomania based on economic foundations. . . the boasting of the rich.*

*In 5:1-6 he investigates the strong accusation of the exploitation of day laborers, practiced by large land owners. . . and emphasizes the definitive character of judgment. . . on these individuals.*

The final section of Krüger's thesis contains further reflection on poor and rich in James' Letter with implications for today under the following headings:

***God's Option and the Dignity of the Poor*** presents the inversion of relations with the election of the poor and the judgment on the rich. . . Combined with the majesty of Jesus Christ, this principle prohibits any attitude which creates differences between persons, thus opposing diametrically every social stratification and power structure. . . oppression, exploitation, trials, blasphemy, thirst for profit, selfish accumulation of goods, waste, condemnation, and assassination.

***Resistance against the Irruption of Favoritism.*** . . . underlines the establishment of a space liberated from favoritism within Mediterranean society sustained and contaminated by a system of patronage. . . a unique manifesto against this model.

***The Coherence of the Christian Life.*** . . . This is about a counter-cultural and non-conformist practice that questions society's model as a whole. . . an integral project of Christo-centric faith carried out through the ethic of love for the marginalized.

***Language and Text as Instruments of Liberation.*** . . . in the struggle against the ideology of favoritism and in favor of the construction of the identity of the excluded ones.

***The Challenge of Prophetic Christianity.*** . . . the denunciation, resistance, and burning desire for justice for the poor. . . action that concretizes salvation in Jesus Christ, proclaimed and apprehended by faith, in a new lifestyle with special responsibility for the poor, oppressed, and marginalized.

- 1. Read over the six texts examined by Krüger and make your own theological/practical conclusions.**
- 2. Consider the mechanisms regarding rich and poor in your faith community in the light of James' challenge of prophetic Christianity.**

# RESPONSIBLE DISCIPLESHIP

## THE EARTH CHARTER

*We stand at a critical moment in Earth's history, a time when humanity must choose its future. As the world becomes increasingly interdependent and fragile, the future at once holds great peril and great promise. To move forward we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace. Towards this end, it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations.*

The Preamble of the Earth Charter begins with these words. The Charter itself represents a long process going back to the 1992 Rio Earth Summit and the parallel Global Forum of almost 10,000 non-governmental organizations from 171 countries, followed by a decade of worldwide conversation including experts and grassroots communities, and culminating with the endorsement of the UN General Assembly in 2002. Its vision includes specific commitments under the following outline:

### I. RESPECT AND CARE FOR THE COMMUNITY OF LIFE.

- 1. Respect Earth and life in all its diversity.*
- 2. Care for the community of life with understanding, compassion, and love.*
- 3. Build democratic societies that are just, participatory, sustainable, and peaceful.*
- 4. Secure Earth's bounty and beauty for present and future generations.*

### II. ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY

- 5. Protect and restore the integrity of Earth's ecological systems, with special concern for biological diversity and the natural processes that sustain life.*
- 6. Prevent harm as the best method of environmental protection and, when knowledge is limited, apply a precautionary approach.*
- 7. Adopt patterns of production, consumption, and reproduction that safeguard Earth's regenerative capacities, human rights, and community well-being.*
- 8. Advance the study of ecological sustainability and promote the open exchange and wide application of the knowledge acquired.*

### III. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

- 9. Eradicate poverty as an ethical, social, and environmental imperative.*
- 10. Ensure that economic activities and institutions at all levels promote human development in an equitable and sustainable manner.*
- 11. Affirm gender equality and equity as prerequisites to sustainable development and ensure universal access to education, health care, and economic opportunity.*
- 12. Uphold the right of all, without discrimination, to a natural and social environment supportive of human dignity, bodily health, and spiritual well-being, with special attention to the rights of indigenous peoples and minorities.*

### IV. DEMOCRACY, NONVIOLENCE, AND PEACE

- 13. Strengthen democratic institutions at all levels, and provide transparency and accountability in governance, inclusive participation in decision making, and access to justice.*

- 14. Integrate into formal education and life-long learning the knowledge, values, and skills needed for a sustainable way of life.*
- 15. Treat all living beings with respect and consideration.*
- 16. Promote a culture of tolerance, nonviolence, and peace.*

- 1. Consider the range of concerns in this document and compare them with your own concerns.**
- 2. Consider the relevance of these concerns for the work of your faith community.**

## THE NEW STRUGGLE FOR PEACE

Dr. Oscar Arias was President of Costa Rica when he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1987 for his decisive role in bringing to a close the wars of Central America. In 1999 he gave a lecture at Dartmouth College on “Globalization and the New Struggle for Peace.” Following are portions from that speech.

*While the age of the cold war has ended, it has not been followed by the promised era of peace and prosperity. This is supposed to be a time of peace. But how can we say that there is peace when thousands are made to work in dehumanizing conditions? How can we say there is peace when we build more prisons and fewer schools? How can we say that there is peace when so many go hungry. Today I challenge you to think about peace in a new way. When we demand peace, it must not only be a peace of national security, one which talks bombing and gunfire. It must also be a peace of human security, one concerned with the welfare and health of humanity.*

*The [globalization] system encourages insatiable consumption and consumerism for some, but denies many others the basic necessities of life.*

*I tell you that there is a much deeper crisis underlying the financial panic. I say that it is an economic crisis when nearly a billion and a half people have no access to clean water, and a billion live in miserably substandard housing. I say that it is a leadership crisis when we allow wealth to be concentrated in fewer and fewer hands. . . . I say it is a moral crisis when 40,000 children die each day from malnutrition and disease. And I say it is a democratic crisis when 1.3 billion people live on incomes of less than one dollar a day and in their unrelenting poverty are totally excluded from public decision-making.*

The tragedy of Central America is that the peace accords, which brought to an end most of the overt military repression, have not brought about the more basic peace that Dr. Arias has been calling for. Rather, national and international institutions and structures have been put in place to impose economic repression to benefit private and corporate interests at the expense of the majority poor under the rule of “free market” ideology.

**1. How do “free market” ideology and arrangements determine the distribution of wealth in Central America and more widely around the world?**

**2. What is the role of the U.S. and what is our responsibility?**

## GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

The Second Quarter, 2003 issue of *Global Future: A World Vision Journal of Human Development* focuses on “Gender and Development.” It includes articles by the Deputy Secretary-General of the UN, the Director of Oxfam GB, the German Minister for Economic Co-operation and Development, the Presbyterian Church representative to the UN, and several World Vision staff. World Vision describes itself in the following language:

*World Vision is a Christian relief and development partnership that serves more than 85 million people in nearly 100 countries. World Vision seeks to follow Christ’s example by working with the poor and oppressed in the pursuit of justice and human transformation.*

*World Vision recognizes that poverty is not inevitable. Our Mission Statement calls us to challenge those unjust structures that constrain the poor in a world of false priorities, gross inequalities and distorted values. World Vision desires that all people be able to reach their God-given potential, and thus works for a world that no longer tolerates poverty. (25)*

Fatuma Hashi, Director for Gender and Development with WV, writes: “World Vision now implements a Gender in Development policy, has endorsed the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, and advocates for the universal ratification and implementation of all human rights treaties.”(5)

Barbara Stocking, Director of Oxfam GB, writes: “You cannot be serious about tackling poverty unless you deal with gender inequality. Seventy percent of people who live in extreme poverty (less than US \$1 per day) are women and girls.” She explains that it is not enough to offer specific programs for women’s development. “All development work and humanitarian action has to be considered in the light of gender inequality.” This means change in power relations, change in hearts and minds, change in roles for men as well as women, change in laws “to build gender issues into national planning.”(3-4)

Louise Frechette, Deputy Secretary-General of the UN, reports that “a gender perspective has become integrated into virtually every aspect of UN activity and discussion—reflecting the growing understanding that we cannot solve any challenge that touches on the lives of people around the world without looking at how women are affected, and how they can be part of the solution.” The elimination of gender disparity in education is one of the eight Millennium Development Goals.(1-2)

The opening editorial of this issue of *Global Future* includes these words. “Ultimately, all actors in development must accept that initiatives to achieve real progress in gender issues must be rooted in promoting women’s rights. These rights are God-given, a reflection of the biblical call for justice and wholeness. The church itself has a vital role to play in challenging stereotypes, and encouraging education and awareness on gender issues.”

**1. What are some of the biblical grounds for justice for women and girls? How is this matter related to Sabbath economics and Jubilee spirituality?**

**2. What are members doing to promote gender equality in your congregation and community, in the US and the world? What more might they do?**

## COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

The January/February 2003 issue of *Church & Society*, a publication of the Presbyterian Church (USA), is “A Centennial Celebration” of 100 years of Presbyterian ministry with urban, immigrant and working people. It takes as its starting point the 1903 appointment of Charles Stelzle to head the Workingmen’s Department for the Board of Home Missions. In 1910 Stelzle took over an abandoned church building on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, called it the Labor Temple, and organized, in his words, “a real workingman’s church.” (11) At the end of World War II this became the location of the Presbyterian Institute of Industrial Relations, a center for the training of clergy and lay leaders. This denomination, like others, experienced numerous efforts to seek justice for working people, to challenge the churches to deal with urban and industrial crises and realities, to issue social pronouncements, to work for just laws and just administration of those laws, to oppose political oppression and exploitation, and to support those who seek dignity, freedom and respect. (16)

George Todd writes on “Presbyterian Urban Ministry, 1945-80” with some references to international and ecumenical developments. He reports:

*For many church workers in the 1960s community organizing became the single most important strategy for urban mission. Community organizing was recognized as a form of ministry that carried forward the long line of the church’s service in urban communities. The pioneering work of the church in establishing schools, hospitals, and community centers had led to the assumption of responsibility for health, education and welfare concerns by secular public and private bodies. Over time, however, a recognition emerged that a major problem for urban people was the lack of power to participate in shaping the conditions of their communities. Community organizing was seen as a way low-income community residents could be empowered to define issues and participate in bringing about change through locally accountable leaders. (24)*

This movement dates from two historic meetings in October 1939 in a Back of the Yards neighborhood of Chicago led by Bishop Bernard Sheil and sociologist Saul Alinsky. 10,000 union members and supporters met to avert a local strike at the Armour meatpacking plant and the wider meatpacking industry, when John L. Lewis was revitalizing the labor movement. Based on his initial success there, Alinsky soon “established the Industrial Areas Foundation as a base for nationwide organizing efforts. He expanded the work to other communities and began to train organizers. Alinsky’s organizations evolved as broad-based, multi-issue, interfaith and powerful institutions. . . . The core activity of community organizing—building power by way of hundreds of individual and small group meetings—is still one of its distinguishing and sustaining characteristics.” (34)

Congregation Based Community Organizing has become a major movement revitalizing churches in ministries for social and economic justice, using Alinsky methods. Many religious traditions participate; they organize around many agendas and issues. “By their strategic work in ‘living wage’ campaigns CBCOs are making a real difference in just wages and participatory economics in cities and rural areas across the country.” (38) The Presbyterian Church (USA) is the largest Protestant donor of community organizing.

**1. What role does your local church play in community organizing?**

**2. What programs of community organizing does your denomination support?**

## TRADE FOR LIFE

*World trade has the potential to lift millions of people out of poverty. But at the moment most of the benefits of trade go to rich countries. (Christian Aid News)*

Probably the U.K. has had the most successful Jubilee 2000 campaign for cancellation of the debt of the poorest countries. With the realization that unjust trade arrangements are for these countries even more detrimental than debts, organizations such as Christian Aid have been lobbying and demonstrating before Parliament, 10 Downing Street, and local Members of Parliament for change in the rules and practices of global trade. They point out that current trade rules are heavily weighted in favor of rich countries, because rich countries and huge transnational corporations dominate world trade. The World Trade Organization, which is controlled by these powerful forces, sets the most important rules, covering investment, services, agriculture, and intellectual property as well as trade. “Under WTO rules, developing countries are unable to raise the price of imports to protect local producers, but rich countries are able to protect their own markets from poor countries’ exports to them. According to the U.N., poor countries lose around \$20 billion a year due to an inability to export their food products to rich countries through these trade barriers.” (CAN)

Economic globalization has intensified the search for cheap labor, elimination of unions, minimal social benefits and ecological protections in the name of “free” trade. This has been called a “race to the bottom” as poor countries compete for investment funds, trade openings, and employment for their workers. As U.N. General Secretary Kofi Annan points out, the poor countries want to trade their way out of poverty and dependence by gaining fair access to global commerce. U.K. advocates for Jubilee have been pressing their government “to use their influence on the international stage to call for a major review of international trade rules so that trade works for the poor and not against them.” (CAN) This campaign is called “Trade for Life.” It advocates trade rules that:

- *have poverty eradication as a key aim,*
- *are monitored to check their impact on poverty,*
- *are decided by a democratic and transparent process,*
- *are enforced to make sure the rich as well as the poor abide by them,*
- *cover the activities of large transnational companies as well as governments.*

For some time U.K. Jubilee forces have been working toward a code of basic human and ecological values with the major supermarket chains, which do an annual business of over 50 billion pounds annually. Under “free” trade ideology, each chain must compete with the others in the “race to the bottom” mentioned above. Under the alternative proposal, a level playing field of basic human rights, labor rights, consumer protections, and environmental concerns would be established for the benefit of all without prejudice to business.

**How might such critiques and efforts affect U.S. trade locally, nationally, and globally?**