



Faith Assertions

These seven assertions ground our work to end systemic poverty in the biblical tradition, our Reformed theology, our confessional heritage and our Presbyterian policies. They can be used together or separately to lay a foundation for your congregation's anti-poverty work. Incorporate them in worship liturgically as a "declaration of faith," include them in newsletters, post them on your church's website, and distribute them to poverty study and discussion groups.

We believe God calls us to work to end poverty and to create communities of well-being. We believe that God created the world and called it good; that the earth belongs to God; that God tasked the first humans with serving and preserving God's Creation; and that the prophets called again and again for God's people to seek well-being and justice for all people.

We believe Jesus Christ models how we are to live in community and to confront systems of injustice, including poverty. Jesus Christ taught us to care for the vulnerable, to be a good neighbor and to provide food to the hungry. Christ came to proclaim good news to the poor. Jesus Christ came not to condemn the world, but to save it.

We believe the Holy Spirit inspires, motivates and guides all faithful work to eradicate poverty and build communities of well-being. The early Christians supported sharing things in common for the good of all. Throughout the centuries, Christian hospitality has included providing food and shelter. In the Lord's Prayer, we pray for God's kingdom to come "on earth" as it is in heaven, and we believe the Spirit works in the world to make this so.

We declare that poverty is not a personal problem but a corporate sin and that "a church that is indifferent to poverty, or evades responsibility in economic affairs, or is open to one social class only ... offers no acceptable worship to God. ... Enslaving poverty in a world of abundance is an intolerable violation of God's good creation." (PC[USA] Confessions of 1967)

We declare that "We Presbyterians evaluate any economic system not simply on the basis of the material goods and services it provides, but especially on the basis of its human consequences: what it is doing to, with and for people, particularly the most vulnerable among us. In our tradition, economic behavior, like all behavior, must be subject to moral scrutiny. For this reason, the church must speak to the present economic crisis, to the devastation it has brought, and to the hope to which we bear witness: that, in Christ, a more just order is arising." ("Living Through Economic Crisis," 219th General Assembly (2010))

We repent that Christians have misunderstood or been misled by biblical passages taken out of context or by theological interpretations that distort the gospel's original intention. We repent that the church has used Scripture to uphold systems that perpetuate oppression and poverty. We do not believe that "the poor will always be with us" indicates poverty is inevitable or God's will. We do not believe that "blessed are the poor in spirit" indicates it is a blessing to lack economic sufficiency or basic human rights. We do not believe in a prosperity gospel in which God blesses faithful people with economic riches and condemns unfaithful people to poverty.

We advocate for global economic justice through a range of strategies and approaches including racial, gender and environmental justice, care for refugees and immigrants, guaranteed minimum wages and full employment, support for programs that meet the needs of women and children, and welfare reform that neither requires "workfare" nor punishes the poor. In our advocacy, we ensure that the voices of impoverished people enable us to discern and address the root causes of poverty.