

HEALING THE BROKEN COVENANT

Marin Interfaith Council, Spring, 2006 Public Policy Series
The Scandal of Poverty: America's Broken Covenant

○ *When you make your neighbor a loan of any kind, you shall not go into the house to take the pledge. You shall wait outside, while the person to whom you are making the loan brings the pledge out to you. If the person is poor, you shall not sleep in the garment given you as the pledge. You shall give the pledge back by sunset, so that your neighbor may sleep in the cloak and bless you; and it will be to your credit before the Lord your God.*

You shall not withhold the wages of poor and needy laborers, whether other Israelites or aliens who reside in your land in one of your towns. You shall pay them their wages daily before sunset, because they are poor and their livelihood depends on them; otherwise they might cry to the Lord against you, and you would incur guilt.

Deuteronomy 24: 10-15

- *We cannot suffer with the poor when we are not willing to confront those who cause poverty.* Henri Nouwen, Dutch Catholic priest, 1932-1996
- *A nation that spends more on weapons of mass destruction than on programs for social uplift is a nation approaching spiritual death.*
Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. 1967
- *This country will not be a good place for any of us to live in unless we make it a good place for all of us to live.* President Theodore Roosevelt.
- *Estimated current minimum wage if it was indexed to the rate of growth in CEO salaries since 1980: \$40.97 an hour, or \$85,218 per year for a full time employee. Actual minimum wage: \$5.15 an hour, or \$10,712 per year for a full time employee.* Professor John Kenneth Galbraith, Economist 1908-2006
- *When I give food to the poor they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a communist.*
Archbishop Dom. Helder Camara, Brazil, 1909-1999

POVERTY IN THE NORTH BAY - 2006

The income of the top fifth of working families grew 6 times faster than that of the bottom fifth in Sonoma and Napa counties. The income of the top on-fifth income earners in Marin County grew by 38% while that of the bottom one fifth fell 2% since 1990.

Since 1990 poverty has increased faster among working families than among the population at large: 40% faster in Napa, 80% faster in Marin, 7 times faster in Mendocino and 8 times faster in Sonoma.

One in six working families in the North Bay does not earn enough money to pay for basic needs, and more than one-third of workers in the region do not earn enough to enable two parents working full-time to support two children.

New jobs being created are concentrated in professional and service jobs, which are at the opposite ends of the wage scale. **Two-thirds of the new jobs projected through 2008 do not**

require any post-secondary education or vocational training.

www.Neweconomynorthbay.org

CONGREGATIONAL COVENANT

- 1) **We pledge to build partnerships with local non-profit agencies** that offer emergency food, clothing and shelter, by offering our volunteer hours and financial or other contributions.

- 2) **We pledge to choose one specific poverty issue, (health care, housing, wages, immigration, education, child care) as a priority for action in our congregation.** We will research (which will include many meetings with various stakeholders,) analyze, mobilize, act and evaluate our work on this specific issue.

- 3) **We pledge each year to advocate one state or federal public policy issue that addresses poverty. Information sources include:**
 - [contact: Betty Pagett, bpagett@eahhousing.org to be on her alert list]
 - National Low Income Housing Coalition www.nlihc.org
 - Center for Community Change www.communitychange.org
 - California Budget Project, www.cbp.org
 - Sojourners www.sojo.net
 - Tikkun www.tikkun.org
 - National offices of your faith tradition

- 4) **We pledge to create a congregational education series on specific issues of poverty and steps to initiate more lasting solutions.**

- 5) **We pledge to integrate the realities of poverty and the call for economic justice into our congregational liturgy, worship, prayers and events.**

- 6) **We pledge to reflect our own experiences of material and spiritual poverty, and the specific connections between affluence, lifestyle and poverty.** See the websites on footprint, www.affluenza.org.

*Created by the Public Policy Team of the Marin Interfaith Council
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