



## Resources on Systemic Poverty

### ***The Book of Confessions***

#### The Confession of 1967, 9.46

The reconciliation of [humankind] through Jesus Christ makes it plain that enslaving poverty in a world of abundance is an intolerable violation of God's good creation. Because Jesus identified himself with the needy and exploited, the cause of the world's poor is the cause of his disciples. The church cannot condone poverty, whether it is the product of unjust social structures, exploitation of the defenseless, lack of national resources, absence of technological understanding, or rapid expansion of populations. The church calls [all people] to use [their] abilities, [their] possessions, and the fruits of technology as gifts entrusted to [them] by God for the maintenance of [their] family and the advancement of the common welfare. It encourages those forces in human society that raise [people]'s hopes for better conditions and provide them with opportunity for a decent living. A church that is indifferent to poverty, or evades responsibility in economic affairs, or is open to one social class only, or expects gratitude for its beneficence makes a mockery of reconciliation and offers no acceptable worship to God.

#### Confession of Belhar, 10.7–8

We believe

- that God has revealed God's self as the one who wishes to bring about justice and true peace among people;
- that God, in a world full of injustice and enmity, is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor and the wronged
- that God calls the church to follow God in this; for God brings justice to the oppressed and gives bread to the hungry;
- that God frees the prisoner and restores sight to the blind;
- that God supports the downtrodden, protects the stranger, helps orphans and widows and blocks the path of the ungodly;
- that for God pure and undefiled religion is to visit the orphans and the widows in their suffering;
- that God wishes to teach the church to do what is good and to seek the right;
- that the church must therefore stand by people in any form of suffering and need, which implies, among other things, that the church must witness against and strive against any form of injustice, so that justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream;
- that the church as the possession of God must stand where the Lord stands, namely against injustice and with the wronged;

- that in following Christ the church must witness against all the powerful and privileged who selfishly seek their own interests and thus control and harm others.

Therefore, we reject any ideology

- which would legitimate forms of injustice and any doctrine which is unwilling to resist such an ideology in the name of the gospel.

### A Brief Statement of Faith, 11.2

We trust in Jesus Christ,  
fully human, fully God.

Jesus proclaimed the reign of God:  
preaching good news to the poor  
and release to the captives,  
teaching by word and deed  
and blessing the children,  
healing the sick  
and binding up the brokenhearted,  
eating with outcasts,  
forgiving sinners,  
and calling all to repent and believe the gospel.

Unjustly condemned for blasphemy and sedition,  
Jesus was crucified,  
suffering the depths of human pain  
and giving his life for the sins of the world.

God raised this Jesus from the dead,  
vindicating his sinless life,  
breaking the power of sin and evil,  
delivering us from death to life eternal.

### **The Directory for Worship**

God sends the Church to show compassion in the world: feeding the hungry, caring for the sick, visiting prisoners, freeing captives, sheltering the homeless, welcoming strangers, comforting those who mourn, and being present with all who are in need. These acts of compassion, done corporately or individually, are the work of the Church as the body of Christ. We are called to minister directly to people's immediate hurts and needs. We are also called to confront and challenge systems that perpetuate human misery. We participate in Christ's compassionate ministry through local acts of witness and advocacy, through the programs of the larger church, and in cooperation with other agencies and organizations committed to human welfare.

In the Service for the Lord's Day, God's call to compassion is proclaimed in the Word and

enacted through the Sacraments. We confess our complicity in oppressive structures, pray for those who are hurting, offer our resources to alleviate suffering, and commit our time and energy to care for those in need. Following the example of Jesus Christ, we pledge that we will respect the dignity of all, reach out to those judged undeserving, receive as well as give, and even risk our lives to show Christ's love (*Book of Order*, W-5.0303).

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