

Religious Leaders' Statement

As leaders of churches and Christian organizations in the United States, we give thanks to God for the progress made against hunger and poverty in recent decades. We recognize that to reach the goal of ending hunger and poverty by 2030, as enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goals, it is necessary to address challenges that workers face around the globe.

The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. —Matthew 20:1-3

We affirm the dignity of workers and their right to a just and fair wage. Labor is part of the creative and generative work of God that brings dignity to all people—yet workers earning poverty-level wages experience a variety of indignities, such as the denial of benefits, unsafe working conditions, wage theft, and other labor violations.

When he went out again about noon, and about three o'clock, he did the same. And about five o'clock, he went out and found others standing around, and said to them, 'Why are you standing here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard.' —Matthew 20:5-7

We affirm the need for investments in distressed communities. There are significant barriers to work in communities with high concentrations of poverty—such as lack of public transportation, high-speed Internet, and other vital infrastructure—that depress local economies and lead to high rates of unemployment.

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When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, ‘Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.’ When those who he hired about five o’clock came, each received the usual daily wage. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual wage.’—Matthew 20:8-11

We affirm investments that leave no one behind. People who are part of disadvantaged groups have valuable contributions to make to their communities. Investments in human capital provide opportunities for them to grow into their God-given potential—investments such as job training for youth neither in school nor working, those who were incarcerated, and those living with disabilities

‘I am doing no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to the last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous? So the last will be first, and the first will be last.’—Matthew 20:13-16

We affirm partnerships among business and faith leaders, entrepreneurs, government agencies, and workers themselves that will strengthen communities and families around the world. The global economy is complex and often pits workers across the globe against each other. We believe in a God of abundance who calls us to see beyond this zero-sum approach to economic development.

We affirm sustainable development in the United States and around the world that can move us to end hunger and extreme poverty by 2030.

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