

# ***PROCLAMATION AND CALL TO OUR CHURCHES***

## ***Preamble***

***We are a group of Anabaptist, Baptist, Evangelical, Holiness, Pentecostal, Reformed and Wesleyan Christians who invite others in our biblical traditions to join us in a "Proclamation and Call to Our Churches." We are persuaded that local congregations of our faith perspectives should explore congregation-based community organizing as a means to faithfully live out the Gospel.***

Congregation-based community organizing is a process that enlists churches in faith- and value-based action to address the economic, social, and cultural conditions which individuals and families alone lack the power to change. Congregation-based community organizations can provide opportunities for Biblically based action on behalf of justice in the world. Congregation-based community organizations are federations of faith communities that involve large numbers of people in negotiating with decision makers to reach solutions to critical issues impacting our communities. Among these issues are: health care, quality of education, criminal justice, pornography, substance abuse, racism, sexism, unemployment and underemployment, neighborhood services and affordable housing. Congregation-based community organizing can be an instrument for the shalom of our communities.

***We speak in the tradition of the great revivals of the 18th and 19th centuries when our predecessors led the struggle to:***

abolish slavery;

create real neighborhoods to replace slum conditions that forced people to live in degrading poverty;

end child labor, as well as other abuses of working people; and,

extend the right to vote to women.

***We speak in the liberating tradition of the African-American church which has historically understood God's purpose to include community, justice and freedom. In this tradition, we stand with:***

the slaves whose Christianity embodied the prophetic voice of Israel and who

reminded us that the City on the Hill was also Pharaoh's Egypt;

the abolitionists who struggled to end slavery; and,

the civil rights movement of the 20th century.

***We speak in the tradition of the Azusa Street Pentecostal movement which:***

recognized the importance of community, and challenged a concept of individualism that affirmed human independence by denying our interdependence;

broke barriers of race, ethnicity and gender by recognizing the uniqueness and gifts of all people; and,

reaffirmed the presence and power of the Holy Spirit among us.

In these traditions, to those who share them with us, we speak.

## ***CALL***

***We call our churches to explore participation in local congregation-based community organizations.***

As those created in the image of God and being restored to that image through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, with whom we enter into a personal relationship by grace through faith,

***We are committed to...***

his saving work on our behalf and on behalf of the world for which he died,

the authority of the Scriptures,

the power of the Holy Spirit, and

the mission that Christ's body, the Church, is to be the instrument of Christ's work in the world.

### ***We declare that ...***

we are called corporately and individually to love God with all our hearts, minds, souls and strength, and to love our neighbors as ourselves;

we are called corporately and individually to live out the gospel through verbal

proclamation; discipling faithful, loving communities; and in action which is guided by the instruction of the Scripture.

### ***We confess that...***

we have separated the gospel into the verbal proclamation and the social witness, cleaving to one or the other and often leaving out altogether how we structure our relationships to one another in the richness of God's Reign.

we have erred by forgetting parts of the gospel and ignoring areas of life and ministry, as though they were exempt from the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

But because we live by grace through the saving work of Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit...

### ***We joyfully affirm....***

God invites us to seek and find forgiveness for our sins and to initiate new beginnings as we re-commit ourselves anew to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

We are convinced that congregations can be strengthened and encouraged through participation in congregation-based community organizing.

We intend to encourage our churches to explore involvement in congregation-based community organizing as a means to bring forth powerful action in the world, that remains faithful to the mandate of the Scriptures.

We affirm that this involvement will serve as a powerful witness to the unbelieving world as to the nature of our God. Our broken world needs to hear again that our God both loves the poor and yet despises and judges those who would degrade those held in special esteem by the Creator.

We affirm that this involvement will help our congregations deepen their body life in this time when we, like the society around us, often have become fragmented collections of individuals rather than communities of faith, love, justice, power and sound minds.

We affirm that, coupled with prayer, this involvement will help our congregations recover their roles as God's instruments in building the Reign of God at a time when the great majority of us feel relatively powerless in the face of systemic and institutional forces of evil that seem beyond our influence.

We affirm that this involvement will assist our congregations in reconnecting with our neighborhoods when we, like many other institutions in our society, have often become commuter institutions, out of touch and out of love with the neighbors in the shadow of our doors.

We affirm that this involvement will help us recover our concern for justice for our communities at a time when many of our churches have limited our concerns to an individual pietism, to personal redemption, and personal morality. Having ignored our prophetic and corporate roles in confronting institutional sin and promoting institutional reconciliation and institutional redemption, we affirm our involvement in congregation-based community organizing as a means by which our congregations will recover their ability to confront systemic injustice, to deal effectively with the worldly manifestations of the 'principalities and powers' and to hold institutions accountable to the purposes intended for them by God, who is reconciling all things.

We affirm that this involvement will help us reconnect to our biblical mandate to call human systems and institutions to account when they stray from their godly purposes. The godly intent for our economic institutions is a just stewardship of the resources received from God, both as goods and services. The godly intent for our political institutions is to be instruments of *shalom*, thus providing justice for all which orders, empowers, delivers and distributes according to basic needs.

We affirm that this involvement will help us recover a biblical understanding and use of power, so that power whether in our church structures or in other institutions of society, is subjected to the lordship of Jesus Christ as an instrument of love for all people.

We affirm that our congregations' involvement will deepen the spiritual and ethical foundation of existing congregation-based community organizing efforts as we call all involved congregations to constant biblical reflection and to deeper dependence on the work of the Spirit.

To leaders and congregations of our faith perspectives who long to see the church act more faithfully in these ways, we solemnly, humbly and joyfully issue this *PROCLAMATION AND CALL* to engage in this process of exploration and involvement.

While we affirm this kind of organizing will aid us in praying and working for God's Reign to come, we also acknowledge that the Reign of God and our salvation will never be fully realized until Jesus Christ returns.

### INITIATING SIGNERS

**Rev. Lyman J. Alexander**, Director of Missions, Crescent Bay West Los Angeles Southern Baptist Association; **Dr. Julie M. Anderton**, Director, Center for Christian Women in Leadership; **Rev. Mark Auxter**, Pastor, Mount Airy Presbyterian Church; **Rev. Cliff Benzel**, Executive Vice-President, Evangelicals for Social Action; **Rev. M. Cecilia Broadous**, Associate Pastor, Los Angeles Baptist City Mission Society; **Dr. Galen Carey**, Midwest Area Director, World Relief; **Pamela Wong Chao**; **Mrs. Delia Realmo DeSoto**; **Mr. Pat-Copeland Malone**, First Presbyterian Church; **Dr. Francis M. DuBose**, Senior Professor of Missions (ret), Golden Gate Seminary; **Dr. Ronald Glen Frase**, Professor of Sociology (ret), Whitworth College; **Dr. C. David Gable**, Assistant Superintendent, Assemblies of God, S.C.A District; **Rev. Ronnie M. Griffin**, Associate Pastor, Mt. Moriah Baptist Church; **Dr. Vernon Grounds**, President Emeritus and Chancellor, Denver Seminary; **Mrs. Theresa Hartwell-Streets**; **Rev. Krystal Hutt**, Associate Pastor, Macedonia Baptist Church; **Dr. Bruce W. Jackson**, Center for Urban Ministerial Education, Gordon-Conwell Seminary; **Dr. James K. Law**, Senior Pastor, Chinese United Methodist Church; **Dr. Ron Kernaghan**, Pastor, La Habra Hills Presbyterian Church; **Dr. Robert C. Linthicum**, Executive Director, Partners in Urban Transformation; **Dr. Michael A. Mata**, Director, Urban Leadership Institute, Claremont School of Theology; **Dr. Alice Mathews**, Associate Director, Doctorate of Ministry Program, Gordon-Conwell Seminary; **Dr. George D. McKinney**, Bishop, Second Jurisdiction, Church of God In Christ; **Rev. Nancy C. Moore**, Urban Ministry Group; **Dr. Stanley W. Moore**, Professor of Political Science, Pepperdine University; **Dr. Stephen Charles Mott**, Pastor, Cochesett United Methodist Church; **Rev. Bertha Pittman**, Pastor, New Life AME Zion Church; **Rev. John Powell**, Pastor, Maranatha Church of God in Christ; **Mr. Grant D. Power**, Consultant, West Angeles Community Development Corporation; **Dr. Lindy Scott**, Professor Foreign Language Department; Wheaton College; **Dr. Helene Slessarev**, Director of Urban Studies, Wheaton College; **Rev. Cynthia E. Smith**, Pastor, Radiant Life Ministries Center; **Mrs. Marilyn Stranske**, National Organizer, Christians Supporting Community Organizing; **Prof. Janet Furness Spresart**, President, North American Association of Christians in Social Work; **Dr. Walter R. Tilleman**, Pastor, Pleasant Street Baptist Church; **Dr. Timothy Tseng**, Crozer Asst. Professor of American Religious History, Colgate-Rochester Divinity School; **Dr. Eldin Villafane**, Center for Urban Ministerial Education, Gordon-Conwell Seminary; **Mr. Craig W. Wong**, Ministry Coordinator, Grace Fellowship Community Church.\*

*\*Titles and organizations are listed for identification purposes only. Signatories join in this statement as individuals*

## Christians Supporting Community Organizing

P.O. Box 8766, Denver, CO 80201