

**PERSPECTIVES ON ECONOMICS AND ETHICS
BEHAVIOUR UNDER SCRUTINY**

**My Neighbour Near and Far
A Contemporary Framework for Christ Centred Witness**

Background

1. This was a consultation asked for by the Porvoo Primates, who reflecting on the overall context of the Churches in the Porvoo Communion, were keen to have a theological and sociological perspective on human and humane values through a gathering of a wide international range and diversity of voices from multiple contexts. It therefore gives expression to a range of different voices within a diverse gathering of Christians seeking to articulate vital elements related to our economic and ethical life as global citizens.
2. It is not intended that this report substitutes any work member churches may have already done in the area of ethics and economics. Rather, it is to be considered as an additional resource for churches to reflect upon and use where appropriate.
3. Pope Francis' Apostolic Letter *Evangelii Gaudium* together with the suggestions of the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Busan for a seven years Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace for a new Economy of Life, have shaped some of the thinking in this report. Both the Pope's and the WCC's initiatives could also become additional useful resources in addressing issues of ethics and economics when discussed, debated and embraced in an Anglican-Lutheran context.

Scriptural and Economical Theological Introduction

4. The Bible is clear that the abundant and generous creation which we take for granted is God's free gift to all living things, both human and in nature. God has ensured that these resources of creation are enough and continue to be enough for all to live abundant lives. There is more than enough for all if only each takes what is necessary and does not deprive others of what they need. This happens best when God's providential economy is shared with mutual care and dignity, when economic systems are able to also focus on the needs of the poor, the suffering, the downtrodden and the marginalised, when just and equal relationships can flourish and goodwill and harmony prevail in our habitat. It is the will of God that injustice of any kind is overcome and that all creation share in God's bounty.
5. When on the other hand we humans plunder the earth's resources and exploit each other out of greed, and when certain economic systems promote the

idolisation of money and human oppression, we violate God's economy and threaten to destroy all life. In such circumstances the task ahead of us becomes extremely complex and difficult and diminishing of the other.

6. Our world continues to need movements and instruments of liberation, care and hope for all who are abused and afflicted, including our environment. We need to move towards building new societies in which injustice, discrimination, corruption and violence have no place, and in which voices are raised in solidarity with and alongside all victims of violence, especially the poor and the homeless, the stranger-migrant, abused children and women, victims of war, refugees and those who suffer discrimination because of ethnicity, religion, class or sexuality.
7. The Gospel offers hope to God's whole created world. The engagement with scripture from a local and global perspective that focuses on economical and ethical issues will provide fresh insights and grounding to our thinking. Jesus invites us to discern the Reign of God and do justice by our neighbour and nature. Human beings are part of God's total creation. We are to follow Him to reconciled and integrated return to a joyful sharing of life, values and resources with all living things.
8. What the Torah in the Old Testament calls for in the name of God, the liberator of slaves, is "no exploitation of human labour" and "no accumulation of wealth for greed". This is evident from the weight of the framing of the Decalogue. "I am Yahweh, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:2; Deuteronomy 5:6). "Neither shall you greedily desire your neighbour's house or field . . . or anything that belongs to your neighbour" (Deuteronomy 5:21).
9. In situations in which an economy turns itself into one based on money and property accumulation without consideration for those in poverty and those marginalised and oppressed, the call of the prophets is for justice. The prophet Amos expresses this in the powerful call: "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever flowing stream" (5:24). What Jesus called for in addressing the temptation to honour other Gods in the Roman Empire is: "make a decision between God and mammon!" What does this call mean for Christian Churches in situations where in many parts of the world those suffering feel that financial markets, without due consideration for large sections of the poor and needy, are increasingly controlling not only the economy but also democratic politics and the hearts and minds of people?
10. The call of Jesus to choose between God and mammon, points to saying a clear no to systems that splits people into rich and poor, producing hunger and death and increasingly destroying the conditions for future life on this earth given to us by God. In all ages there have been those who have responded to Jesus's call by putting God before mammon and sharing their goods with those in need, as was the case with the Good Samaritan. On the other hand an often assumed imperative of capital growing without limits, can also result in a concentration of

power in the hands of a few and can cause enormous challenges to the environment, and also cause financial crisis and hardship.

11. Churches at all levels can participate in nurturing an economy and a culture of life in the following ways:
 - Through prayer and providing theological resources for our congregations in mission.
 - By Cooperating in local/regional alternative economies like, for example, *Local Exchange and Trading Systems* (LETS); cooperative banking; self-reliant production and consumption of alternative energy at community level; local production, marketing and consumption of ecologically grown food.
 - By building alliances to intervene, where necessary, in political and economic structures, and questioning the benefits of privatisation of basic goods so essential to struggling communities and suffering people, such as water for the profit of a third party, which does not guarantee any local social benefit.
 - By engaging in creative conversations with systems and concepts with an intent to transform, in order that systems are inclusive, looking at the whole picture and not excluding the poor and marginalised.
 - Through advocacy measures with an intent to transform.
 - Through developing initiatives to overcome modern slavery.

SECTION 1

Engaging with Human rights

12. A focus on human rights offers an extraordinary vision of human dignity and justice which churches can celebrate tempered always by the most inclusive understanding of the Body of Christ. Churches have a significant contribution to make to the on-going conversation in our society about what human dignity requires built on our understanding that every human being is created in the image of God. Our acknowledgement of God as the centre of human life and our affirmation of the liberating presence of God in our midst empowers us also to proclaim the public meaning of the Gospel. In doing so our theology has to be one of refreshed participation and engagement to shape change, dignity and understanding.
13. The God given dignity of humanity is threatened by economic or other systems that devalue human beings as a means to the end. The economy of God provides enough for all but our world is one where injustice is able to undermine human dignity. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and legislative structures derived from it provide a way to address injustice and restore dignity to all. However, this will only happen in a civic context when individual states have robust legislation to protect human rights, when companies act with social responsibility and when civil society is able to seek redress.

14. We have freedom, but also responsibilities towards our creation as individuals, as communities and as nation states. Standing for the universality of human rights at all times is a crucial call for all of us as citizens of our respective states. A vision of a Europe which embraces human rights will need to remain a permanent objective if we dare to hope for a just, democratic and plural society.
15. The 2008 financial crisis and current conflicts in different regions in our world, have led to a massive enforced movement and migration of people, seeking security and protection. Our Churches are called to find pragmatic solutions for the everyday life of such uprooted people regardless of colour, race, gender, religion, belief or age. It has also become increasingly necessary that churches offer informed advice and assist such persons to seek redress through human rights commissions, equality bodies, ombudspersons, and so on. In all this the emphatic voice of Churches will make a difference. Churches are also called to take a stand for the promotion and protection of human dignity of persons with disabilities, prisoners, abused women and those in need of shelter.
16. In many countries job losses are on the rise. Women and migrants as well as children and persons with disabilities are primarily affected and enjoy less protection. Many seasonal workers do not have proper contracts. There is also an urgent need to address issues of human trafficking and statelessness that affects around ten million persons across the world.
17. Therefore it is of vital importance to remind all European Christians and citizens that they do have rights and voices in society. Article 1 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union declares that ‘human dignity is inviolable. It must be respected and protected’.
18. Churches are encouraged to give human rights issues an important place in their political pressure groups, calling on their communities to strengthen human rights locally and globally by urging the state to provide clear legal frameworks and appropriate principles.
19. The recent economic and financial crisis contributed towards a further weakening of the promotion and protection of human rights in many countries. European states need to open their hearts and minds and deliver on the protection and promotion of human rights with greater purpose in their engagement with International and regional organisations such as the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation (OSCE) and the European Union.

Engaging with the Economic System

20. Some insight for engaging with the economic system is given below:
 - Since economic systems are created by human beings, it is important to be aware that it is possible to transform them into becoming more inclusive systems seeking the good of all. Many human beings suffer under the

present conditions created by human beings. As Christians and Churches, we do have biblical perspectives that help address current economic and ethical challenges.

- Discovering a voice for the present context is important; together, churches have a stronger voice and could work against any collaboration or colluding with injustice, since such collaboration is painful to God. As a reflection of the incarnation, we need to stoop together from where we are to enter and understand the harsh realities of the world so that we may rise together (Philippians 2.6-11). This is an unconditional ethic for all our churches. Churches that stoop with Christ will rise with Christ to a world that glorifies God. But without stooping there is no rising. This is a genuine interpretation of Kenosis as a paradigm of discipleship and imitation of Christ.
- There is a sense in many churches of a crisis in our Christian discipleship as well as a lack of Christian confidence in addressing issues from a biblical perspective in our increasingly secular and pluralistic world. This is an area for concern and greater church involvement.
- Many parts of Europe still consider Europe to have a social market economy. Theoretically this may be true, but the reality is frequently different. Questions have been raised in different sections of Europe as to whether the Lisbon treaty reflects a social market economy in the original sense, since the European treaties had established the principle of an open market economy with free competition and maximum growth. While it was clear that growth was necessary and an important element in contributing to flourishing economies, questions were also raised during the consultation as to whether this should be maximum growth and maximum profit or whether sensibly steered growth in appropriate areas and shared profit was an alternative. The question was also raised as to whether an economy built on the goal of maximum growth and greatest return, was an enduring model, since, if the goal is maximum growth, capital and the economy would need to grow without limits. Participants expressed concern that on a planet with limits, however, any system that relies on continuing growth of capital and the economy without any limits, checks and balances, is unlikely to be sustainable in our world of provisionality.

Possible Action Points

21. The Porvoo Consultation invites its constituency, but also other Christian churches in EU member states to explore the possibility of:
 - Strengthening Christian discipleship and Christian Confidence.
 - Devoting time for a completely fresh look into the systemic difficulties in the current economic and ecological order.

- Promoting the right to housing, access to health care and the right to employment for all.
- Resourcing Christians to engage in questions relating to economics, ethics and the common good and to be advocates for human rights.
- Encouraging an interfaith understanding and collaboration on issues of economic justice and human rights.
- Engaging with governments in a proofing exercise or audit of ethical and humanitarian criteria in the ways in which it affects everyday life.

SECTION 2

22. ***Our Faith***

We trust in God, who is Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer and we believe in working with God towards God's purposes in God's world.

23. ***Our Hope***

Our hope is in Christ and the reign of God, which brings justice, reconciliation and peace to all who believe in him, and through them to all whom God has created. The presence of ecumenical groups and movements, that work to liberate both humans and nature are a sign of this hope. We humbly trust that the Porvoo Communion will have a share in this vision and this work and that our unity will improve the quality of human life and relationships and offer protection and care for the environment.

24. ***Our Love***

The Gospel of love is both the chief characteristic and dynamic in the reign of God, who loves humanity without limits or conditions. We are to love our neighbour who is known to us as well as the unknown stranger and migrant at our doorstep and beyond. Love must also convert relationships of suspicion, fear and hostility into mutually trusting and beneficial friendships and partnerships. Since we love because He loved us first, our love for others must be an intrinsic part of the energy generated by God and expressed through the Porvoo Communion.

25. ***Our World***

The reality today is that many areas of our day to day life are locally and internationally interconnected. For example, local markets and local farmers are connected with the Global South through trade. Many northern countries depend on other countries for the supply of vegetables, fruit, coffee, tea etc. The question to be addressed is how one should respond to the reality of both the local and the global. The following are suggested considerations:

- Through prayer relating to action in and for the world; the need to be contemplative before acting is key; hastily put together solutions do tend to go wrong. An important aspect of the Eucharist is that it liturgically expresses what we want done in the world and is an intrinsically Christian understanding of life and mutual responsibility in Christ.
- There is need for a deeper understanding and care for creation. This

understanding is intrinsically linked to our understanding of the world as God's creation.

- The need for a deeper Christian understanding of the global economy.

26. ***Our Jubilee***

Our economic principles should be ethically based. The Jubilee imperative points us to this. It is easy to note what ethical behaviour is, since in many ways such behaviour is a common sense approach. Our Lord's teaching and behaviour points us in the right direction. For example, the parable of the unforgiving servant (Matt.18:23-33) poses some challenges to current economic systems with regard to debt and forgiveness. Forgiveness in Matthew is relational and reciprocal. The point of this parable is clear. Forgiveness lies at the heart of our faith. We have received forgiveness from God first and God expects us to do likewise. Since the Kingdom of heaven in our parable is driven by forgiveness, our practice on earth will need to be likewise driven.

27. Waiting for the next crisis to change course, is not helpful. Constantly learning from crises is key for bringing about change and transformation.

28. To some extent we may have replaced or lost sight of the sense of regular common sense accountability to one another as churches. It is important to consider how the Jubilee periodic review can be more effectively integrated in our liturgies, our ecumenical partnerships and our planning and budgeting. This is an urgent priority.

29. The Jubilee is also practical. It is important to consider the role of the Sabbath in the context of the periodic review. Churches are encouraged to provide a sabbatical rhythm in the life of Judaeo-Christians (ie ourselves) as something connecting us with one of the significant roots of our faith and we can let this flow into our self-care and care for others who may work with and for us and for whom we too work.

30. A regular and thoughtful practice of fasting, as a time for reflection on our reliance on God's bountiful gifts of grace, also links us to the Sabbath. Furthermore, the spirituality of grace before meals is a reminder of the Hand as well as the hands that provide us with the blessing of food.

31. ***Our Neighbour - Part of our Lives***

Who is our neighbour? Our neighbour is part of our life. This realisation will help provide a new way of thinking and an articulation of a theological imperative.

32. In each person we are called to recognise the image of God and the wideness of God's mercy. Love for our neighbour has no limits.

33. Our limited understanding does not give us the full knowledge of everything. We therefore need also to understand the experiences of our neighbour for a wider vision of God. Through such encounters we not only learn more of the

distinctiveness of our own Christian faith but can be further strengthened to be confident and compassionate Christians in a pluralistic world.

34. It is liberating to reflect that our neighbour is also sustained by the grace of God, which is our life-giving source. The Porvoo understanding of the blessing given by the stranger enables the Churches to be united in responding to issues, such as, the diaspora, interfaith and migration and healing relationships. See also Porvoo resources on churches responding to conflict.
<http://www.porvoocommunion.org/resources/general-resources/>

35. ***Our Relationships***

The Porvoo Churches listen to God's invitation to be fashioned by God into a new ecumenical reality. They recognise that they do not live in a vacuum. Relationships are God's gift, so that there is life. Trusting relationships can transform thinking, work for the right of an appropriate livelihood, the right of good behaviour in society and the right of mindfulness for the common good.

36. We are part of a global common humanity. We share life with its happiness and worries, joys and struggles with people of different faiths, and no religion. See also Porvoo Keys for Interfaith Engagement
<http://www.porvoocommunion.org/resources/general-resources/> We are sent by God to share and serve in a common society, as fellow citizens. We need to co-exist and speak and co-contribute to global problems locally.

37. In our church to church relationships it continues to be of importance for churches to understand each other's histories, experiences, pastoral contexts and contacts. Mutual recognition of the integrity, sincerity and good faith of the other is an important factor in responding to situations of conflict in relationships.

38. Consultations and dialogue remain key instruments in holding the churches together.

39. Using a third party in conflict mediation has its classic example in Jesus Christ. It is by an act of God that we remain in communion. This rootedness in and the example of Christ is a resource the churches already have. See also Porvoo resources on churches responding to conflict.
<http://www.porvoocommunion.org/resources/general-resources/>

40. ***Our Money***

Money should be seen in the light of the Gospel. It is an instrument of public good as well as for personal wellbeing, but not for promoting greed and oppression. As an instrument of public good, money can work appropriately in a diversity of areas, such as, medical research, cooperative cultural achievements, but this does not mean exploitation of each other out of greed and for systems to promote the idolisation of money, since this violates God's economy and does not enhance the whole.

41. *Some Action Points for the Local Context*

- Pray together
- Encourage Christians to devote some of their time (about 10%) to visit each other and share in taking care of each other's needs.
- Share good practice
- Re-connect with local communities; strengthen fair trade; buy as far as possible what is locally produced; speak out where necessary and re-claim ones voice.
- There is recognition that food banks are making a significant contribution, but at the same time this cannot become the norm, since those in need are in danger of becoming permanently dependent on such a system, unable to contribute with their potential to society and with human dignity. Furthermore, with the rapid spread of food banks those governing may not give the issue of overcoming poverty, unemployment and homelessness the needed priority.
- Finland has developed a model of joining in an exchange of gifts – *time banks* for exchanging favours or caritative skills. It is an exchange of profit without money (local exchange and trading system LETS = time banks). One needs to be careful that the system is not abused.
- Explore how church land can be used for community development and the common good.
- Christians are challenged as consumers, since they are aware of the kind of consumer a Christian is called to be. Christians in the world of business and commerce are called to be agents of positive social transformation.
- Develop Advocacy Groups at different levels and also work for the freedom of people from debt.

Contributions:

Ethics and Economics: What has the Church got to do with it? *Prof Dr Ulrich Duchrow*, Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Heidelberg (Specialism: Ecumenical and Economic Theology);

An Analysis of Biblical and Current responses to Ethical Challenges in Europe: *The Most Revd Dr Michael Jackson*, Archbishop of Dublin, Church of Ireland;

The Ethical Challenge of Economic Investments and the Role of the Churches: *Dr Signe Jauhiainen*, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, and Economist Pellervon Economic Research;

Social Responsibility, Christianity, Policy and the Danish Theologian *K.E.Løgstrup: Prof Dr Niels Kærgård*, Professor in agricultural economics and policy, University of Copenhagen;

Human Rights and the Economic Crisis in Europe: *Mag. Elisabeta Kitanovic*, Executive Officer Human Rights, Conference of European Churches (CEC);

Economy of Life – The Possibility of a Public Theology in Europe: *The Revd Dr Stephen Plant*, Church of England, and Dean and Runcie Fellow at Trinity Hall, University of Cambridge & Affiliated Lecturer in Theology & Ethics Cambridge University;

Bible Studies: *Bishop Emeritus Dr Duleep de Chickera*, Anglican Church of Sri Lanka;

Panel Discussion Participants: *Mag. Elisabeta Kitanovic* (CEC); ***The Revd Dr Stephen Plant*** (Church of England); ***The Revd Dr John Plant*** (Church of England, and Church Relations Manager at Christian Aid);

Dr Donald Bruce of the Scottish Episcopal Church, and Managing Director of the Ethics Consultancy Edinethics Ltd and former Director, Society, Religion and Technology Project, delivered the sermon at the opening Eucharist and ***The Rt Revd Martin Lind***, former bishop in the Church of Sweden and currently bishop of the Lutheran Church in Great Britain, delivered the sermon at the closing Eucharist.

The Consultation Hosts: the consultation was hosted by ***Archbishop Dr Elmars Ernsts Rozitis***, The Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church Abroad. The Co-Chairs of the Porvoo Communion of Churches have expressed their thanks for the friendship and welcome given to all participants.

The Co-Chairs of the Porvoo Communion of Churches: *The Most Revd Dr Michael Jackson*, the Archbishop of Dublin, Church of Ireland and ***The Rt Revd Dr Peter Skov-Jakobsen***, the Bishop of Copenhagen, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark.

For full participants list please see Annex

The Porvoo Communion of Churches consists of:

Anglican Churches - The Church of England; The Church of Ireland; The Scottish Episcopal Church; The Church in Wales; The Lusitanian Church in Portugal; The Spanish Episcopal Reformed Church.

Nordic Lutheran Churches - The Church of Sweden; The Church of Norway; The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland; The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland; The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark.

Baltic Lutheran Churches – The Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church; The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania.

Lutheran - The Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church Abroad and The Lutheran Church in Great Britain signed the Porvoo Declaration in September 2014 and are now full members of the Porvoo Communion of Churches.

The Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church and Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church Abroad reunited in November 2010. This reunification has brought in Diaspora congregations into the Porvoo Communion of Churches.

Currently the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia is the only church with observer status on the Porvoo Contact Group.

The Common Statement of these participating churches has been hailed as ‘the single most important ecumenical proposal’ to be discussed in many years.

These churches also understand themselves as having a special responsibility for all people regardless of religion and are together in ‘mission and service’.

Annex

PARTICIPANTS

Revd Inga-Lena Arvidsson, Church of Sweden

Dr Donald Bruce, Scottish Episcopal Church

Revd Dr Manuel F. Carrillo, Spanish Episcopal Reformed Church

Rt Revd Dr Duleep de Chickera, Bishop Emeritus, Anglican Church of Sri Lanka

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