

Call to Action regarding the G8 and G20 Meetings

For information and discussion

In June 2010 there will be meetings of the G8 and G20 nations to talk about their progress towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals. The United Nations Millennium Declaration was developed in New York in 2000, with a commitment to a new global partnership to reduce poverty, and to set out goals, with a deadline of 2015. The sixth Annual Interfaith Leaders' Summit will meet in Winnipeg just before the G8/G20 meetings in Huntsville and Toronto. Faith leaders of world religions from around the world will meet to finalize the statement "A Time for Inspired Leadership and Action" and to present it to political leaders.

The United Church has suggested that congregations organize an interfaith dinner in their communities and invite their MPs so that they can hold a discussion about the G8 and G20 Summits and the Millennium Development Goals.

SOSA has looked into this, and we decided that it was not feasible to organize a dinner within the time-frame available. However, we did want to respond in some way. We have therefore compiled a letter, based on the 2010 Interfaith statement: "A Time for Inspired Leadership and Action", and this will be sent to our 3 local MPS: John Baird, Pierre Poilievre, and Gordon O'Connor. The letter is attached, for your information and discussion. We are also attaching other materials, which relate to this topic: The Millennium Development Goals, A prayer of Thanksgiving for the Religions of the World, History of Interfaith Leaders' Summits, and the Golden Rule Across the World's Religions: Thirteen Sacred Texts.

If you would like further information, go to the United Church Website: www.united-church.ca/getinvolved/takeaction/100303

From: The SOSA Committee.

Copy of the letter that is being sent to M.P.s John Baird, Pierre Poilievre and Gordon O'Connor

As members of Bells Corners United Church we are joining with the interfaith community to draw your attention to three specific issues in relation to the meetings of the G8 and G20 nations in June of this year. At that time the two-thirds point will be reached for the deadline to achieve the eight Millennium Development Goals. If these goals can be achieved millions of people throughout the world can be given some hope for the future. Specifically, we would like to see the following areas focussed on: Poverty, the Environment, and World Peace.

Those nations that are included in the G8 and G20 global leaders' summit are among the richest and most powerful in the world. In our faith tradition, power and money are instruments to be used for the good of all. At the summits in 2010 we expect leaders to put first the needs of the majority of the world's population, and of the earth that sustains us.

Poverty

Almost half the people on this earth live in poverty, and one in every seven does not have the food needed to support life adequately. The most vulnerable groups are women and children, indigenous peoples and those with disabilities. People are reduced to extreme poverty because of factors outside their control, including food, energy and economic crises, originating in wealthier sectors of society, and exacerbated by the growing gap between rich and poor.

We know that change is possible. An example of this is the 28% reduction in under-five mortality rates over the past 18 years, as a result of health interventions and decreasing poverty levels.

Wealthier countries can help by reaching the goal of giving 0.7% of Gross National Income in development assistance and cancelling debts of poor countries without regressive conditions. They can also make poverty reduction a priority in trade and international financial negotiations.

The “Golden Rule” of caring for others as we would have them treat us, cuts across cultures and faith traditions.

Care of the Earth

We are looking at the consequences of melting ice-caps and rising sea levels, lost habitats for threatened animal and plant species, and erratic weather episodes. Scientists tell us that time is running out to avoid irreparable damage, and that we need to act now. We have to move beyond short-term political interests and arguments about who pays. We, and future generations, will all pay if we continue to put off decisive action.

Industrialized countries have caused a disproportionate amount of environmental damage. We owe an ecological debt. Wealthier countries need to implement concrete plans to ensure that global average temperatures do not exceed a 2 degree Celsius increase from pre-industrial levels. At the same time, we need to be aware that growth, poverty reduction and environmental stewardship need to be combined in developing countries.

Investment in Peace

There has to be shared security to attain the well-being of all. People in the world’s poorest countries are often victims of war, insurgencies, and other forms of armed violence. We, in our turn, are affected by global turmoil. We know that there can be no peace without justice.

Misplaced priorities are made clear in that financial support for United Nations peace-keeping operations is only a fraction of global military spending. We call on governments to make greater investments in building peace through negotiation, mediation and humanitarian support for peace processes, including the control and reduction of small arms that cause over 300,000 deaths globally every year.

To sum up, the 2010 Interfaith Partnership in Canada and around the world is calling for inspired leadership and action at this critical time. The Interfaith Leaders' Summit will be held in June this year, and will be urging the Government of Canada to make bold decisions at the G8 and G20 meetings. As members of Bells Corners United Church we support what they are asking for,

Yours truly,