

What does the Bible say?

Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people.

(Isaiah 10:1-2)

But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you...and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will have your welfare. (Jeremiah 29:7)

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:21)
God has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; God has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. (Luke 1:52-53)



What does the United Methodist Church say?

We decry the widening gap between the rich and the poor and the concentration of wealth in the hands of ever smaller percentages of the global population. We lament that too many of the world's people lack the basic resources necessary for survival and pledge ourselves to work toward the eradication of the roots and effects of poverty. (The Economic Community, Economic Challenges, B. Poverty and Income Inequality)

National budgets are moral documents. They are a testament to national priorities. May it be that such budgets invest in life-giving and life-sustaining priorities, indeed, the things that make for peace. (2020/2024 Book of Resolutions, #4111, The United Methodist Church and Peace)

The challenges of establishing fair and just tax systems are global. While some nations offer stronger social safety nets funded through more equitable tax systems, everywhere the forces of power and privilege seek to change structures to their benefit, oftentimes at the expense of our poorest and most vulnerable brothers and sisters. In our world economy, too often those individuals and corporations with the most wealth are most able to avoid the social responsibility of taxes by finding exemptions in local tax law or by using varied nations' tax regulations. (2020/2024 Book of Resolutions, #2111, A Call for Just Tax Structures)

The gap between the rich and poor continues to widen worldwide. The eighty-five richest people in the world control as much wealth as the poorest half of the world (source: Oxfam). As our Companion Litany to Our Social Creed states: "God cries with the masses of starving people, despises growing disparity between rich and poor. . . And so shall we." (2020/2024 Book of Resolutions, #2111, A Call for Just Tax Structures)



CHURCH & SOCIETY

The United Methodist Church

Living FAITH Seeking JUSTICE Pursuing PEACE

BUDGET & TAX

What do the facts say?

- Worldwide, health related expenses accounted for 15.5% of total government spending.¹
- Military spending by the United States each year is four times greater than the next highest spending country (China) and more than the military budgets of the ten highest spending countries combined.²
- Since 1990, the number of people living in extreme income poverty has been reduced by more than one billion and yet over 20,000 children die each day due to poverty-related conditions.³
- The wealthiest eight individuals in the world have amassed more wealth than the poorest 3.6 billion people in the world combined.⁴
- Governments are losing \$500 billion in revenue each year as companies shift and shield profits to low-tax jurisdictions.⁵
- The fifteen countries that comprise the Economic Community of West African States are losing an estimated \$9.6 billion in public revenue each year because of tax preferences given to foreign companies.⁶



¹World Health Organization, ²International Institute for Strategic Studies, ³UNICEF, ⁴Oxfam International, ⁵Tax Justice Network, ⁶Action Aid International

What do you say?

Take **ACTION** for justice...

- **Examine** your personal and faith community's spending habits. Do these budgets reflect your values?
- **Reflect** on the assets and needs in your community. Where can your spending - and the collective spending of institutions and governments - support life-giving and life-sustaining priorities?
- **Learn more** about your government's tax and spending decisions. In the United States, visit the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (**cbpp.org**) for the latest analysis of proposed legislation.
- **Contact** your elected officials and tell them that budgets are moral documents and should reflect our shared values by uplifting the common good, supporting the poor and vulnerable, building peace in communities and among nations.



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