

Social Justice

In announcing and establishing God's Kingdom on earth, Jesus built on the laws of Moses and the words of the Hebrew prophets. His was a call for transformation both personal and social. The Christian life is about personal transformation into the likeness of Christ and participation in social justice to bring about God's Kingdom. It is not about one or the other but about "both/and" – a decidedly Wesleyan (and Christian) response.

Both personal transformation and social justice are deeply rooted in the Bible. The Old Testament prophet Isaiah said, "Let me no longer see your evil deeds. Give up your wicked ways. Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the orphan. Fight for the rights of widows." (Isaiah 1:16-17). Paul wrote, "For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus so that we can do the good things he planned for us long ago." (Ephesians 2:10.)

Personal Transformation:

Ezekiel: 11:19

Colossians. 3:1-4

Romans 8:9-11

Romans 12:1-2

Participation in Social Justice:

Ezekiel 45:9

Micah 6:8

Matthew 25: 31-46

Romans 15: 1-4

1Timothy 6:17-19

The Free Methodist Church in Canada is passionate about this holistic life and seeks to work with those who are committed to personal transformation and social justice until the Kingdom of God comes into fullness on earth. For information about social justice issues, see our position papers on *Compassion and the Poor, Human Rights, Response to HIV/AIDS, Women in Ministry, End of Life Care and the Environment.*

The Pursuit of Social Justice

Jesus in announcing the coming and establishing of the kingdom of God on earth called for social justice. The kingdom cannot be separated from societal transformation; all we do for the kingdom will ultimately impact our relationship with the world around us in the following ways:

1. We will take seriously God's repeated calls in both Old and New Testaments to social justice in our time, in our place and in our lives.
2. We will be outraged by what outrages God.
3. We will seek to work cooperatively and collaboratively with government, business and non-profit organizations to bring about social justice.
4. We will be creative and innovative in our thinking, planning and work for social justice.
5. We will design procedures to enable us to quickly respond to social justice issues and needs. We will streamline organizational structures.
6. We will base our thinking, planning and structures on organic principles and will seek organic connections so that change in one area positively affects the other areas of our ministry, community and personal lives.
7. We will pursue both personal transformation and social justice as integral to Christ's call on our lives and his Church.

Resources:

Following are several sources for excellent information and resources on social justice and active involvement in it. The Free Methodist Church in Canada may not subscribe to all that is presented, but where possible we join with those who are working towards the lifting up of all persons.

Amnesty International has a vision of a world in which every person enjoys all human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards. It undertakes research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of

conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination within the context of its work to promote all human rights.

www.web.amnesty.org

Evangelical Fellowship of Canada promotes an evangelical Christian understanding on matters of law and policy. It intervenes before government and the courts on issues concerning Evangelicals, seeking to uphold care for the vulnerable, sanctity of human life, religious freedom, marriage and family and freedom of conscience.

www.evangelicalfellowship.ca

Evangelicals for Social Action

Evangelicals for Social Action (ESA) is an association of Christians seeking to promote Christian engagement, analysis and understanding of major social, cultural and public policy issues. ESA's board of directors includes many prominent leaders of moderate and progressive evangelicalism. ESA emphasizes both the transformation of human lives through personal faith and also the importance of a commitment to social and economic justice as an outgrowth of Christian faith.

<http://www.esa-online.org>

International Justice Mission Canada is a Christian human rights organization that rescues victims of violence, sexual exploitation, slavery and oppression. IJM documents cases of abuse and oppression and mobilize intervention on behalf of those who are suffering. IJM also works to educate and mobilize the Church to seek justice on behalf of the oppressed by creating a consciousness of the biblical mandate for justice.

www.ijm.ca

Mennonite Central Committee is a relief organization that seeks to demonstrate God's love by working among people suffering from poverty, conflict, oppression and natural disaster. MCC serves as a channel for interchange by building mutually transformative relationships. MCC strives for peace, justice, and the dignity of all people by sharing their experiences, resources, and faith in Jesus Christ.

www.mcc.org/canada or canada@mennonitecc.ca

Sojourners is a progressive Christian organization with a mission to articulate the biblical call to social justice, inspiring hope and building a movement to transform individuals, communities, the church, the world.

www.sojo.net or email sojourners@sojo.net

Bibliography:

Brian D. McLaren, "Everything Must Change: Jesus, Global Crises, and a Revolution of Love": Thomas Nelson 2007. Brian McLaren tackles head on the

problem of separating personal transformation from societal transformation. He challenges conventional thinking and practice in the Church and calls for a rethinking of who Jesus is. McLaren insists that Jesus was serious about the coming of the God's Kingdom to the world and that Jesus saw it as a prophetic fulfillment for social justice so desperately needed in his day.

He states that in asking, "What would Jesus do?" we must take seriously the words of Jesus and not just what he said but what his words meant. The challenge is for us to unlearn our meanings and rethink Jesus in the setting of a socially and politically unjust world. We begin this by asking two questions. What are the biggest problems in the world? What does Jesus have to say about these global problems? This is an excellent read both disquieting and exhilarating and a must for anyone wanting to understand that transformation is both personal and social.

See also *The Manual of the Free Methodist Church in Canada*
<http://www.fmc-canada.org/who/manual/CHAPTER%207.pdf> -
(Chapter 7, page 3) under "Compassion and Justice Ministries".